

THE QUAIN PREACHER

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*Yours in Christ,
Samuel Sellars.*

THE
QUAINT PREACHER;

OR,

*THE LIFE AND SAYINGS OF
SAMUEL SELLARS.*

BY HIS SON.

The common people heard Him gladly.—MARK xii. 37.

Second Edition.

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.



IT is now seventeen years since the first edition of these Memoirs was issued ; and though there was no expenditure on advertisements, within twelve months the whole was sold. Since then, we have frequently been importuned to publish a second and popular edition, to which we have at length consented.

To the names already recorded, we have now to add that of the Rev. W. M. Hunter, as one by whom we were greatly aided in the preparation of this work.

The omission of his *Introduction* is simply owing to the reduced price of the book. So many of my father's contemporaries having followed him into the "world of light," it may be thought that this new issue is out of time ; yet, seeing that there is such a desire to initiate and sustain "*forward movements*," it may guide and stimulate us in this advance, to consider the methods of our "*fathers* ;" particularly of those who were signally

honoured of God in promoting the extension of His Church.

Should this record of a saintly life contribute to this end, our reward will be ample.

Sincerely yours,

SAMUEL SELLARS.

119 ST. SAVIOUR'S ROAD, LEICESTER,
10th November 1891.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.



THE reader will perceive that in writing this volume, the pen of more than one writer has been employed ; and that its pages are enriched by contributions, furnished by gentlemen, whose knowledge of Mr. Sellars was so thorough, that each communication might be appropriately prefaced with the language of the beloved John, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you."¹

To all who have taken a generous interest in the volume, and in any way helped to enhance its value,—especially to the United Methodist Free Church Book Room Committee, for the gift of the portrait which embellishes it,—we acknowledge our indebtedness.

Of the subject of these Memoirs, little here requires to be said. No attempt has been made to conceal anything relating to his character ; but to "speak of him as he was, and nothing extenuate." To his strong Methodist proclivities, prominence has been given. For nearly

¹ 1 John i. 3.

forty years he was a minister of the gospel of Christ ; a consistent Dissenter ; one of those plain spoken and energetic Christian workers, to whom—whatever the religious denomination to which they belong—the nation and the world owes a debt of eternal gratitude. He courted not fame ; he was content to “serve his generation by the will of God ;”¹ and his chief memorial is to be found in the works that follow him, which, like that of the woman who anointed the Saviour’s head with precious ointment, will never be forgotten.

All pecuniary profit, arising from the sale of this edition, will be appropriated to Mrs. Sellars, who, humanly speaking, was left, with five young children, without provision. So that all who aid the sale of this book will do something towards helping the widow and the fatherless.

We pray that the blessing of Him, in whose fear all our works should be begun, continued, and ended, may accompany this effort to make His name known upon earth.

SAMUEL SELLARS.

THE FELLING, GATESHEAD,
20th July 1875.

¹ Acts xiii. 36.

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MEMOIRS.



CHAPTER I.

THE CALL.

THE words of Geikie are so appropriate as to need no apology for their introduction here. "There is a saintly light round goodness that neither intellect, nor natural tenderness, nor the most enlightened sentiments can create. Even in private life, real worth makes itself felt all round ; is honoured and imitated by many whom it never knows, and is long remembered with respect. It is independent of position or endowments. The grave of the 'Dairyman's Daughter' has become a pilgrimage, and every neighbourhood has its local saint.

"It is a touching illustration of its value, that there is no legacy of more real moment to a child than the reputation of a parent. To have been the son of one whose memory lingers like light in the air, is not only a delightful recollection and a powerful stimulus, but a great material aid in life. No household can be called poor with such an inheritance, nor any parent really lost whose nobler life still survives in the breasts of his children." And what is true of the household, is also true of any denomination of the Christian Church with which men of saintly lives have been identified. As

visible workers they may be no longer in our midst, but their invisible influence lingers amongst us — is ever present with us.

If Mr. Sellars' influence for good had depended upon his worldly endowments, it would have been too small to warrant any attempt to perpetuate his memory. He was born near Pentneb, in Derbyshire, on the 3rd of November 1811. His parents were small farmers and stocking-makers. At the village of Heige—to which place the family removed—his mother, by reading a Baptist hymn-book, was awakened to a sense of her sinfulness, and was led to give herself to God. She became a member of the Baptist Church, worshipping in Bridge Street Chapel, Belper. For some time her husband persecuted her, but by a consistent walk in Christ Jesus, she was instrumental in bringing him to a knowledge of the truth. Having become partakers together of the grace of life, they remained steadfast to the end, and for forty years were exemplary members of the Baptist denomination.

Owing to the brutality of a schoolmaster, Mr. Sellars was taken from school at the age of eight years, and was put to work in a stocking-frame, the intention at the time being to send him to another school when a suitable opportunity presented itself. Family circumstances, however, required his help at home, and the opportunity never came. He continued to go to the Sunday school, and afterwards when preaching in the connected chapel was wont to speak of the good he had thereby derived. But the elements of a rudimentary education were mainly acquired, by his own unaided endeavours, after his conversion. It is to be regretted

that his early educational advantages were so limited, for he had a quick perception, a tenacious memory,—in facts and dates seldom equalled,—and a mental vigour which, under culture, would have been difficult to surpass.

There is no testimony forthcoming as to when or where he first experienced religious impressions. Probably, under the Spirit of God, they may be ascribed to his mother's influence, who, from the time he was able to walk the distance, took him in all sorts of weather—health permitting—every Sabbath morning two miles to chapel. At sixteen years of age he was prostrated for six weeks by a severe attack of fever. That affliction had a voice, which taught him such important lessons, as led him ever afterwards to designate the fever his "tutor," and the place of suffering "his college." On removing to Derby, he became a member of the Rev. J. G. Pike's church choir; and while attending that gentleman's ministry was led to religious decision. It was the practice of that eminent minister to visit the choir during rehearsals; and often did Mr. Sellars speak of the gracious influences which attended his exhortations, as he sought to impress its members with the necessity of cultivating a state of heart and life, that would harmonise with the sentiments of the hymns. How much envy, bitterness, strife, and schism, which too often mar the peace and utility of our choirs, might be prevented, were ministers to go and do likewise!

Shortly after conversion he felt constrained to preach the gospel he had hitherto sung; and accordingly became a lay preacher among the Baptists. Yielding, however, to a characteristic ardour, he engaged in open-air and other services, which the elders of the Church deemed

irregular. Feeling their rules to be unreasonably restrictive, he joined the Arminian Methodists, by whom he was accepted as a local preacher. The same year, 1835, at the annual meeting of that denomination in Leicester, it was resolved¹ "that Samuel Sellars be received into the itinerant ministry." While this was being done in Leicester, he was working at his stocking-frame in Derby, and had no idea of the action taken by the Conference till he was officially informed of his appointment to a Circuit. The call was unexpected, and was considered premature by some of the Derby friends, seeing he had not been recognised by them as a fully accredited local preacher.

The Rev. Henry Breeden, first minister of the Arminian Methodist Connexion, has favoured us with the following account of his denomination; and, as little is known of its origin and usages by Methodists generally, we here insert it:—

"The Arminian Methodist Connexion was formed in February 1832. Nearly the whole of the first members had been in Society with the Wesleyan Methodists. At that time there were in the Derby Circuit a number of very zealous local preachers and class leaders. Some of them were men of considerable worldly substance, and others had good talents. Their labours were truly successful in getting souls saved, and in promoting extensive revivals of religion: they were soon therefore designated the Revival Party. And, because they laid much stress on the duty of believing for salvation, they were also called the Derby Faith People. They were very diligent in attending the various means of grace.

¹ Moved by Mr. Travis, seconded by Mr. Spencer.

“ Many of these people were in the habit of frequenting a public band meeting every Saturday evening, on the premises of Green Hill Chapel, Derby. But early in the year of 1832, four local preachers were tried, and expelled, for continuing a public band meeting the usual length of time, after the superintendent preacher had decided that it should, for his accommodation, be closed earlier than usual. The consequence was, that as a protest against those expulsions, nearly six hundred church members at once withdrew from the Wesleyan Society. It was a general saying amongst them, ‘ If these men are not fit to be members of the Methodist Connexion, neither are we fit to be members, therefore at once we resign.’

“ Several of those who withdrew had school and other rooms at their disposal, which they forthwith opened for the holding of separate services. A few days afterwards, a meeting of class leaders and local preachers was held on the premises of Mr. John Spencer, solicitor, Derby; when, after mature deliberation, Mr. Breeden was unanimously requested to break up his establishment as a schoolmaster, and take charge of the Society as superintendent. After due consideration, Mr. Breeden replied, ‘ That he would accede to their request provided they would not agitate the Wesleyan Societies, nor proselyte from them, but heartily join with him in striving to save souls from the world, and in establishing Methodist Societies on true scriptural principles.’ To these conditions they agreed, and there and then a new branch of the Methodist community was formed, which was designated the Arminian Methodist Connexion.

“ All connected with the movement set to work. The

preachers went forth preaching Christ; souls were saved, and revivals of religion begun in almost every place to which they went. In a short time, without any proselyting or agitating about differences, Circuits were formed in and around Derby, Nottingham, Leicester, and Redditch; and Societies were raised in Manchester, Birmingham, and many other places. While this work was going on, several itinerant ministers had to be employed; amongst them was Mr. Sellars, who, having caught some of the Arminian fire, entered heartily into the work, and was very successful.

“The usages of the denomination were, with one or two exceptions, much the same as those of other Methodist communities. The constitution of the Annual Conference differed a little from that of other Methodist bodies. Every itinerant preacher had a seat in the Conference, by virtue of his having been accepted as a minister. And each quarterly meeting had also the right to send lay representatives to the Conference, regulated by the number of members belonging to the Circuit.

“The doctrines held by the Arminians were the same as those held by the Wesleyans. The local preachers were frequently advised and encouraged to keep in their preaching close to the old Methodist pressing-points. Hence, they always strove to get sinners broken down into a state of godly sorrow on account of sin, before they encouraged them to believe. They laboured hard to get penitents to give up all; then simply trust in the blood of Christ for salvation. They insisted much on the necessity of the direct witness of the Spirit; of the work of entire sanctification; and of living by faith in Christ every moment.

“In the year 1837, at the Liverpool Annual Assembly, the whole of the Arminian Methodists united with the Wesleyan Methodist Association. But it is proper here to add, that the type of an Arminian Methodist, which Mr. Sellars took at first, he retained to a considerable extent through the whole of his life.”

Mr. Sellars' first Circuit among the Arminians extended from Ashbedale to Tansley, a distance of forty miles, which he had to walk. In this field of labour he met with plenty of hard work, and exceedingly primitive entertainment. At one place, undue importance having been attached to an exaggerated report of his eccentricities, the members of the Church had determined not to receive him, and had sent a message to that effect to a gentleman,¹ on whom he was to call *en route*. But, as he went direct to his appointment without making the anticipated call, he knew nothing of the message, till, by the Divine blessing upon his labours, those who sent it were humbled and ashamed. In this Circuit he cheerfully and successfully toiled, and was highly esteemed by the people.

His next station was Nottingham. During his location here, the amalgamation between the Arminian Methodists and the Wesleyan Methodist Association took place. The Association had a minister in this town, and Mr. Sellars, not wishing to stand in the way of union, and conceiving that the united Churches in Nottingham would not be able to support two ministers, resigned his position as a preacher, and resumed his secular calling. But his conduct in relation to this matter being brought before the Connexional

¹ Mr. Page, of Nottingham.

authorities,¹ he was not long allowed to remain at his employment. He was desired to supply the Bradford Circuit, and was officially received in the year 1837 as a preacher having been two years on probation.

The upper room, in which the Association at that time held services in Bradford, was called the Band Room. A number of Socialists and professed Atheists held their meetings in a lower room of the same building. Their meeting being concluded, they would sometimes join the Associationists, and, not observing the greatest decorum, would distract the preacher, and annoy the congregation. On one of these occasions, having transgressed more than ordinarily, Mr. Sellars turned sharply upon them and said, "The tree is known by its fruit. We will turn the present service into an experience meeting, and *our friends* shall say what the gospel has done for them, and *you* shall say what infidelity has done for you." Then came testimonies from reformed drunkards, swearers, Sabbath-breakers, of enslaving vices from which they had been emancipated, and of the peace and joy experienced through believing. These followed in such rapid and unceasing succession, that the preacher, thinking they would monopolise the meeting, desired them to stop for the present, that the other side might be heard. After this came a most extraordinary reticence. The infidels' experience was either too profound or too shallow to be uttered; the preacher believing it to be the latter, and determined to goad them on to some confession of their condition, said, "Has your infidelity ever given you an hour's happiness?" "Yes," replied one of them. "What sort of happiness was it?"

¹ By Mr. Page, of Nottingham.

asked the preacher. "The happiness of a good dinner," replied the infidel. "Then," said Mr. Sellars, "your happiness has amounted to nothing more than the happiness of a pig, and *that* your infidelity has not given you, but the God whom you deny." The humour, point, and piquancy of this retort so discomfited the scoffers, that they never again molested the upper room assembly. A correspondent¹ writes, "The Socialists often pained Mr. Sellars by their opposition, and they sought to engage him in public discussion; he, however, was not to be turned aside from his ministerial duties." But although he was indisposed to discuss the disputed points with them in a formal way, he was not prepared, as the above shows, to allow them to have it all their own way, or to receive their insults without rebuke.

The same writer, speaking of his work generally, continues, "Mr. Sellars had to do the work of Liberal Methodism in Bradford under great disadvantages, and was the pioneer of better things. Steps were taken to secure land, and after he left a chapel was built, which has since been enlarged and much improved. The Circuit, by the Divine blessing and the amalgamation of other Churches, became one of the largest in the Connexion. In the days of their strength and prosperity, the few who remained of those who were members of the Bridge Street Church when Mr. Sellars laboured there, bore him in remembrance with strong affection and high regard. His after visits to this town, on anniversary occasions, were seasons of much pleasure and profit to his former hearers, and to others who became members in later days."

¹ The Rev. J. Adcock, ex-president.

Another contributor¹ from the same town writes, "I have lively recollections of Mr. Sellars coming to Bradford, and of the first band meeting he attended in the upper room, Butterworth Street. Much of the power and glory of God rested on the people. He made no pretence to greatness, but many souls were converted under his ministry. The young converts were regarded by him with a special and tender solicitude. One of them being expelled from home on account of his religious profession, he undertook the responsibility of finding him another home, and also of obtaining for him suitable clothes in which to appear on the Lord's day. Camp meetings and open-air preaching were services for which Mr. Sellars was especially adapted, and in them he took delight. In such services he was accompanied by a large staff of young converts, by whom he was greatly beloved, who aided him in singing through the streets. He was extremely charitable, and could not pass a case of distress if it were in his power to relieve it; indeed, he would have given away the whole of his income, had it not been for the judicious interposition of the person with whom he resided. He greatly relied on the sympathy and prayers of his congregation for inspiration and ability to preach the word. When on a visit to Leeds, feeling himself hampered in preaching, he loudly exclaimed, 'Would that I had fifty of my Bradford prayer-books here, they would help me.' The question of his remaining in the Circuit another year being mooted, one of the brethren asked him 'If he would be willing to continue for such a salary as the Circuit could conveniently raise?' To which he replied,

¹ Mr. J. Raistrick.

‘If you will get me a machine, that is, a stocking-loom, I will work at that during the week, and preach three times every Sabbath for naught.’ But it was thought expedient to remove him, which removal was acutely felt. On the morning of his departure a large number of his spiritual children assembled to bid him farewell, and very touching was the scene as they mingled their parting tears. Some time after, several of them hearing he was to conduct a love-feast at Luddenden-foot, in the Todmorden Circuit, resolved to attend it. At the sight of them, he wept and shouted for joy. The service being over, he took them all to an inn and ordered tea; they afterwards sang Zion’s songs, and had a glorious prayer-meeting, separating amid tears of love and shouts of praise. His memory is precious to many in Bradford, and at various times in our love-feasts not a few thank God that such a man ever came to the town.” Another,¹ speaking of this revival, says, “God blessed him with amazing success; scores of souls were converted, and one of them—at that time in poor and obscure circumstances—has since been the mayor of Leeds.”

From Bradford, in the year 1838, he removed to Worksop. The minister² now³ stationed there writes, “The details of Mr. Sellars’ ministry, owing to the number of years which have elapsed since he was located here, cannot be ascertained. There are, however, two anecdotes well remembered, which show the determination with which he did his work. A friend at Worksop had invited a few young persons to his house, and Mr. Sellars, being a general favourite, was there to

¹ Mr. T. Summersides.

² The Rev. O. Beckerlegge.

³ 1872—1st edition.

meet them. Everything proceeded pleasantly until the time came for him to leave for his appointment. The young people urged him to remain, but he would not be persuaded. They then had recourse to a trick to detain him, and hid his hat, nor would they tell where they had secreted it. But he was equal to the emergency, and walked to his appointment without one. The other is a striking incident illustrative of the scathing manner in which he could deal with the boldest transgressor. One Sunday evening he preached in the open air at the Old Market Cross. Whilst delivering his sermon, a drunken man came out of a neighbouring public-house with a pot of beer, and pressing through the crowd, he shouted, 'Wilt'a hev a sup?' No attention was paid by the preacher, who was earnestly engaged in his theme. Nearer and nearer pressed the man, evidently gaining courage, by a non-rebuke, until the pot was actually thrust in the preacher's face, the man all the while inviting him 'ta hev a sup.' Mr. Sellars now stopped abruptly, and with a stern glance said, 'Take it to thy brother Dives in hell, for he wants a sup.' The intruder was abashed by the rebuke, and without offering further interruption quietly slunk away. The preacher proceeded with his discourse, the circumstance only serving to deepen the impression already made on the hearts of his hearers."

His next Circuit was Todmorden, to which he was appointed by the Annual Assembly of 1839. One of the most judicious men in that Circuit¹ sums up his character and work there in one sentence—"A singular man, and singularly useful."

¹ Mr. R. Thomson.

CHAPTER II.

THE CHOICE.

THE opening of this chapter introduces us to a most important epoch in the life of Mr. Sellars. "Notwithstanding all we meet with in books, in many of which, no doubt, there are a good many handsome things said upon the sweets of retirement, yet still 'it is not good for man to be alone.' Nor can all with which the cold-hearted pedant stuns our ears upon the subject ever give one answer of satisfaction to the mind. In the midst of the loudest vauntings of philosophy, Nature will have her yearnings for society and friendship. A good heart wants some object to be kind to ; and the best part of our blood, and the purest of our spirits, suffer most under the destitution.

"Let the torpid monk," says the writer from whom we quote, "seek heaven comfortless and alone—God speed him ! For my own part, I fear I should never so find the way. Let me be wise and religious, but let me be a MAN. Wherever Thy providence places me, or whatever be the road I take to get to Thee, give me some companion in my journey, be it only to remark to, how our shadows lengthen as the sun goes down ! to whom I may say, how fresh is the face of nature ! how sweet the flowers of the field ! how delicious are these

fruits!" Mr. Sellars was *manly* as well as religious, for in the spring of 1841, when travelling in the Sunderland Circuit, he was married.

The memoir of Mrs. Sellars, written by her husband, exhibits this event as one of special interest, by reason of the relationship before subsisting between them. "About one hundred years ago," he writes, "at the foot of the Peak of Derbyshire, near Lea Hurst,—the home of the world-renowned Miss Nightingale,—there lived John Sweeting, a lead miner and farmer, famous for his clear, strong, and musical voice. Such was its power, that when he went into a small country fair, and, putting his hand on a beast, said to the seller, 'Well, lad, what do'st ax for this?' he would be heard and recognised by all present. He had two daughters. One was married to a man whose name was Taylor, and the other to Samuel Sellars, of Southwingfield-hill-top. They each had sons. The son of one was John Sellars, my father, and the son of the other was William Taylor, my wife's father. Thus our fathers were cousins, our grandmothers sisters, and our great-grandfather was the above John Sweeting, and his blood meets again in the veins of my children.

"Tryphena, the youngest child of William and Mary Taylor, was born at Southwingfield, Derbyshire, June 6th, 1822. Her father and mother—whose remains now lie in that village churchyard—when married, were declared by the vicar of the parish to be the handsomest couple he had ever united. But, alas! her parents, though honest and respectable, were living without God in the world. And, notwithstanding her grandmother on her mother's side was a devout Methodist, nearly all

they had to do with that body of Christians was to take in the preacher's horse, for which they were allowed a pew in the chapel.

"About twenty-two years ago, Tryphena's sister Ellen died of consumption. The visits of Samuel Brentnall, a poor, afflicted, but pious Methodist, were the means of her conversion. Her triumphantly happy death had a great effect upon the family and the young people of the village. About the same time, two young men and myself, belonging to the village, but then living in Derby, were remarkably constrained to pray for our relations at Wingfield, not knowing what was going on there,—it was fourteen miles distant,—when news came of a revival, and that three girls, who were praying together, had been converted. One of these was Tryphena. We visited the place, and were glad to see the grace of God. One thing which I remarked in that revival was, that as soon as the young folks got on their knees, each began to pray as if unconscious of the others' presence. Tryphena's sister and mother were also converted at that time.

"In the year 1840, when in the Todmorden Circuit, I received a letter from Tryphena concerning my father. It was so cleverly written, that I said to my colleague, with whom I resided, 'Brother Edgar, do you not think that a woman who has such a head, heart, and hand as this letter indicates, would do for a preacher's wife?' His opinion coincided with my own. I therefore named the subject to her; and although she had other suitors with better worldly prospects than I could offer, she preferred me, and, because of spiritual advantages, her mother approved her choice. She was eventually given to me

in marriage by brother Edgar, at the Independent Chapel, Belper, April 23rd, 1841. The Revs. T. Gathorn¹ and R. Ingham² officiated. The powerful prayer for us by the latter,—my parents' minister,—and the Divine influence felt on that occasion, I shall never forget."

In Mrs. Sellars his ideal of what a wife should be was realised. Before marriage he had often said, "A preacher's wife should have a lady's face, a servant's hands, and a Christian's heart." And after marriage he added, "I am thankful the Lord has given me a help-mate who excels in all these particulars."

In proof of the high Christian type of his wife's character, Mr. Sellars writes, "Soon as we got to Houghton-le-Spring, in the Sunderland Circuit, she undertook a work of special mercy. A young woman,³ suffering from a spinal complaint, had been for a long time bedridden. My wife got her removed to our lodgings, carried her about from room to room, and ultimately was instrumental in restoring her. But the exertion which this work involved brought upon Tryphena a severe illness."

Thirty-four years have passed, and still persons are found in the Sunderland Circuit who delight to speak of the gracious influences and results which attended the labours of those two co-workers and famous outdoor preachers and singers, Messrs Wolstenholme⁴ and Sellars. Owing to financial burdens upon the chapel trust, it was found impracticable to retain the services of two married preachers; accordingly, in September 1841, Mr. Sellars removed to Gosport, in Hampshire.

¹ Independent minister.

² Baptist minister.

³ Ann Speight, of Hetton.

⁴ See Sigston's *Life of Wolstenholme*.

Of this place he has left the following record :—"I found the cost of living exceedingly high, and the churches, three in number, exceedingly low." One preaching place was on the border of a parish, where the parson and the squire were united in their efforts to exclude Dissent. The daughter of the former gentleman "wondered how it was the people would not go and hear her papa ; they used to go and hear her grandpapa, and her papa preached the *same sermons* as did her grandpapa." The conduct of a certain parishioner was a source of no little trouble to these zealous guardians of the parish ; for not only did he, like another Mordecai, refuse to submit to those who plotted against his liberty, but he carried his rebellion so far as to entertain those men whom the parson and the squire contemptuously designated "vulgar Methodist preachers"; and inasmuch as the Methodists could not obtain a room in the parish in which to worship, he hired one in an adjoining parish, and in that room he, his family, and a few neighbours worshipped every Lord's day. In the house of this worthy farmer a bed was made for the preacher on the front room sofa—in the winter it was placed before the kitchen fire. Upon this extemporised couch Mr. Sellars slept soundly till about five o'clock in the morning, when he was aroused by a slight oscillation, caused by the servant man and maid conveying him and his bed into the parlour, that they might proceed with their household duties. In the memoir we read, "At Gosport we remained two years without seeing a relation, and there Tryphena was nearly left a widow with one child ; I had a severe affliction of fever and ague. She cast her care upon the Lord, and

cheerfully ministered unto me without fear as to results."

In 1843 he removed to Northwich, in Cheshire. Being the first married man appointed as second preacher to that Circuit, he found no house. An effort, however, was made by the ladies, and, under the direction of Mrs. Sellars, a house was taken and furnished. And in that house a large class of church members, and a Dorcas Society which she originated, held their meetings once a week. "In the gracious revival with which the Church was visited, she actively engaged with her husband in wrestling with the Almighty for poor penitent sinners, and in pointing them to the Saviour."

Two of the chief friends in this Circuit held strong and diverse opinions on the habit of smoking. The one to whom the practice was obnoxious never lost an opportunity at public meetings of condemning it, especially if the other were present. At a certain missionary meeting, having with offensive pertinacity denounced "the vile and wasteful indulgence," and having urged the advisability of devoting the money thus expended to the cause of missions, Mr. Sellars, who followed, said, "I think the best way to rebuke smokers, and convince them of their waste, will be for those who abstain from the use of tobacco, to show how much more they give to the cause of God and the poor, than those do who indulge in its use. Now, here is Brother P., who gives so much a week as class-money, so much a quarter for his ticket, so much a year for missions, who is ever willing to entertain the deputation—to convey him and the speakers on dark nights, over bad roads, to the various meetings—to take the chair,

and give handsomely to the collection : now, if Brother P. will do all this and smoke, then what ought Brother Q. to do who does not smoke ? ” The query prevented for some time the public introduction of a topic which, as a hobby, was more fruitful of foolish abuse and annoyance than of wise admonition and loving reproof.

Here in Northwich his second son was born. In publicly baptizing him he said, “ I desire to have a monumental recognition of all the Lord has done for me ; I will not, like Joshua, raise a heap of stones, but I will raise up this child for God’s glory.” Then lifting him up before the congregation, he observed, “ Here I raise my Ebenezer : Ebenezer, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

While in this Circuit, it was his privilege occasionally to sojourn at the home of a gentleman,¹ than whom there were few keener observers of men and things. This gentleman has furnished us with the following frank opinion concerning him :—

“ I first became acquainted with Mr. Sellars in 1843 ; and our friendship continued without interruption to the time of his death. During the two years he was in the Circuit, he was my guest for three or four days every month, so that I had every opportunity of seeing him at home as well as abroad. On his first visit he at once established himself in the affections of every member of my family—master, mistress, children, and servants, and thus secured for himself a mighty influence for good. Indeed, his visits to our end of the Circuit were a jubilee to many homes.

¹ The late Mr. J. Edwards, of Frodsham.

“In the then Northwich Circuit, he was popular as a preacher, and exceedingly useful. Sometimes there might be a little extravagance in speech and action, but there was method underlying it, and his evident object was to glorify God. He said what he meant, and he meant what he said. This sometimes involved him in trouble ; but, while his prudence was questionable, none could doubt his sincerity and purity of intention. In no way was he slippery ; never did he tamper with truth, or wink at sin.

“Naturally phlegmatic, he sometimes needed a spur ; but notwithstanding this constitutional infirmity, when once in action he worked like a steam-engine. ‘Mr. Sellars,’ said a friend on one occasion, ‘there are such and such persons who require visiting, will you, please, go and see them?’ ‘Oh,’ said he to the company, ‘he orders me about like an apprentice boy!’ But he went and did his work ; and, as a pastor, he had not many superiors.

“It is not for me to write a critique on his manner and style of preaching, that should be done by an abler pen. But I may say this much, that he possessed a faculty I never knew possessed to the same degree by any other preacher with whom I have been personally acquainted, namely, the faculty to lay hold of any passing incident to illustrate his subject. Whatever his theme might be, if on his way to the chapel any particular incident drew his attention, he would introduce it just at the right time and place ; so that the sermon would appear as a prearranged and comprehensive whole, nothing strained, nothing disjointed.

“He was not one who did a large business on a small

capital ; for although he had not the benefit of a liberal education, he had an inexhaustible store of wealth in his own mind, and he was as fresh when he left the Circuit as he was when he entered it. Men and manners were his books and study ; therefore, no audience went to sleep under his preaching. He never affected to know more than he really did know ; was always ready to learn, and willing to be taught. On one occasion, when preaching to a large congregation, being in doubt of some historical fact, he appealed to a gentleman present as to the correctness of the statement he had made, by saying, ‘I think I am correct, am I not, brother?’

“ In many things he had considerable tact, and showed a deep insight into some parts of human nature. ‘Pat a dog, and he will wag his tail ; strike him, and he will show his teeth,’ was a proverb he deemed equally applicable to the human as to the canine animal. Alternately he and his colleague were appointed to visit a country place ; the congregation being small, the latter scolded those who were present, and, as a natural consequence, it became smaller every time he preached. Mr. Sellars, on the contrary, commended those whose presence showed that cold wet nights, and dark dirty lanes, did not prevent them coming to God’s house ; the result was, his congregation always increased.

“ I have alluded to his occasional imprudence, an instance of this now occurs to me. When at Northwich there was a revival, and after the meetings, Mr. Sellars, full of love and hospitality, invited a number of the friends to his house to satisfy the inner cravings of the natural man. Mrs. Sellars endured this for a time or

two; but, knowing that the corn in her Egypt had a limit, and fearing she might be eaten out of store, and the famine become sore in her land, she asserted her sovereignty over one part of her 'lord's' dominions—the larder.

“Though affectionate and faithful as a husband, as a father he knew how and when to assert his prerogative. On one occasion, while preaching, his infant son was rather unruly, and annoyed him exceedingly. Stopping in his discourse, he said, ‘Take that child out.’ The mother, probably thinking the cause of distraction would cease, kept her seat. On its being repeated, the father raised his voice, and in dignified tones said, ‘If I be a father, where is mine honour?’¹ That was enough; the child Samuel, who, it appears, wanted to preach before his time, was in a summary manner removed from the chapel; and a rapid succession of sharp sounds proceeding from the porch, proclaimed that his want of patience in listening to the gospel preached by his father, had entailed upon him a smart administration of the law at the hands of his mother.

“My acquaintance with Mr. Sellars extended over a period of nearly thirty-one years, and during that time I never knew him to be guilty of one dishonourable action; never did I hear him speak but with the openness of truth; and never did a rumour of anything that would impeach his character reach my ears. He had a few enemies, as every brave, true, and honest man will have, but he had thousands of loving friends.”

From this high testimony to the mental and moral worth of Mr. Sellars, we again turn to the memoir, in

¹ Mal. i. 6.

which he alludes to the Barnsley Circuit, which, on leaving Northwich in 1845, became his sphere of labour. "There," he states, "I found my wife a helpmate indeed. A new preacher's house was obtained, furniture replenished, the chapel put in good circumstances, and we left the Circuit with a hundred more members, and one hundred pounds better in finances than we found it. My wife, assisted by a young woman,¹ raised a class of girls, who met weekly at our house." A lady, now the wife of a missionary in China,² was a member of that class. "Our third son was born in this Circuit; and, as on the same day three were converted to God, and Joseph means increase, we called the child by that name, as a memento of the increase in our family and in the Church.

"While we were at Barnsley, Tryphena's father died of a cancer. That rough preacher brought him to Christ. Prayer was made for him, and I went forty miles for the express purpose of pointing him to Jesus. Whilst I was singing,—

Gracious God my sins forgive,
And Thy good Spirit impart;
Then I shall in Thee believe,
With all my loving heart;
Always unto Jesus look,
Him in heavenly glory see,
Who my cause hath undertook,
And ever prays for me,—

he clasped his hands, burst into tears, and cried, 'This is what I have long wanted!' He held his confidence steadfast to the end. Glory be to God!"

One of the oldest and most esteemed of his minis-

¹ Miss H. Ellison.

² The Rev. M. Meadows.

terial friends¹ writes, "Mr. Sellars once told me of a visit he paid to Barnsley after some years' absence. 'I found,' said he, 'that the members of the Church were not in so good a state as I had seen them, and I determined, without giving offence, to let them know it. A gentleman who was with me in the pulpit now and then gave expression to his feelings. "Ah!" I exclaimed, "I thought you were in need, so I have brought my clerk with me."' The Bible was in rags and tatters; the plaster was falling from the ceiling; and of this unsatisfactory state of things also, in the same inoffensive way, he reminded them. The topic of his discourse was the new heavens and the new earth. In discussing it, he observed that 'In heaven everything was new, always and eternally new; but on earth many things were fading and getting worse for wear. Look at your Bible, and at your chapel,' he added,—significantly glancing from Bible to ceiling,—'and certainly you will find proof of the perishableness of things earthly; but in heaven it will not be so.' 'Really,' said one of the leading men at the close of the service, 'we must have our chapel repaired. 'Yes,' replied Mr. Sellars, 'and I will preach the reopening sermons.'"

The same correspondent, speaking of him when in the New Mills Circuit, to which he removed on leaving Barnsley in 1847, says: "One of the Churches worshipped in a cottage room specially fitted up for that purpose. Mr. Sellars was planned to preach there one day, and arrived behind time, much flushed and heated by hurrying, and the weight of an overcoat. 'Friends,' he said, 'I am late, but I have brought you a present.' 'Eh!' said one to himself, 'I wish I had not been here,

¹ The Rev. B. Glazebrook.

he will think I have come for no other purpose than to share it.' 'I have brought you *salvation*,' said he, 'which of you will have the gift?' His manner arrested the attention of the hearer referred to, who accepted salvation as Heaven's free gift, and from that time he has been a consistent follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Throughout this Circuit I found his name was in fragrant remembrance. One class leader, who had been in a miserably lukewarm condition, told me he believed he should have been lost but for the revival Mr. Sellars was instrumental in promoting."

An influential member¹ in the New Mills Circuit writes thus concerning the revival, which was like a wave of life - power: "From the commencement, the impression was deep and general that Mr. Sellars was sent of God, and soon a spiritual quickening was experienced by all the Churches. The dews of refreshing were speedily followed by glorious revival showers. The Holy Spirit's influence was at work in a remarkable manner. Multitudes who thronged the house of God were pierced by the barbed arrows of the word, and the hearts of many were bound up by the hand of the Great Healer. The work was not like the morning cloud and early dew; but as bread cast upon the waters, seen after many days. Numbers who were brought to know God in that revival have safely reached the pilgrim's home; some, alas! have gone back to the bondage of sin; and, thank God, not a few are still marching through the wilderness under His guidance, scattering blessings wherever they go. The good work continued for two years, and hundreds were converted. His name has been for

¹ Mr. T. Mattocks.

years treasured in this Circuit, and his memory will be long embalmed in many a loving heart."

"We continued," says the memoir, "in the New Mills Circuit three years. Uriah—'the light of the Lord'—was born on Christmas Day, 1847; at the commencement of the greatest revival that Circuit had known for years. The day and the revival suggested the name. The religious quickening and awakening were going on in five places at the same time. My head, heart, hands were so engaged in it, that the excitement became too much for me, I was stricken with paralysis, and was brought near to death; but prayer was made, and the Lord restored me. My wife, in this revival, undertook the responsibility of conducting two classes in which were more than seventy members."

This affliction seized him at Hayfield. He determined at once to go home; and although he could scarcely put one foot before the other, yet, by persevering effort, he succeeded in reaching his house. The doctor considered that the great exertion had prevented worse consequences. At another time, when returning from the same place, the horse he rode stumbled and fell. Providentially, help was at hand, or otherwise the struggling animal, which lay upon him, might have done him great injury. As it was, he escaped with only a bruised limb. In these perils and deliverances he saw God's hand; and, therefore, "he sang of mercy."

CHAPTER III.

DESPISED YET HONOURED.

NEAR the close of the preceding chapter we saw Mr. Sellars fully employed in a religious revival. The reaping time of the Churches had come, and the ingathering was great. Few men were more adapted for this sort of Church work than he. His sympathies were strong, and the points of contact in his ministry numerous and powerful. He grasped, as with a giant hand, the thoughts and emotions of his congregations. His pulpit utterances were pointed appeals, grounded upon the glorious themes of God's love, universal redemption, salvation by faith in Christ, holiness of heart and life, human responsibility, and future rewards and punishments. While in his homely and graphic way these subjects were presented to the minds of his hearers, it was no uncommon thing for the ordinary decorum of worship to be broken in upon by the cry of penitence, and the shout of triumph. The effect at times was overpowering, and the spoil wrested from the foe on such occasions was great.

Of course, things were said and done under excitement, both by Mr. Sellars and those associated with him, that would not have been said and done under less intense feeling. His sayings were often added to and

taken from to serve a purpose ; they were thus circulated, sometimes innocently, but often wickedly, by those of whom better things might have been expected. And owing to the thoughtlessness of well-meaning people, the wilful misrepresentations of tale-bearers, and the scavenging propensities of certain busy-bodies who paid flying visits to his Circuits and gathered up all the dirt they could find, vending it to any customer who might be disposed to receive it, officials, in some Circuits, formed opinions and prejudices adverse to Mr. Sellars, which occasioned him considerable inconvenience and annoyance. When we think of the mischief done to him, and to many others besides him, by the foolish gossip and slander of those who are not worthy to unloose the shoe-latchet of the traduced, with feelings almost akin to despair we sometimes ask, "Will the millennium ever come, when professing Christians will obey the Divine injunction, 'Let all evil-speaking be put away from you'?"¹

The appropriateness of these remarks will appear from what follows. In 1850 Mr. Sellars was appointed to the Nottingham Circuit ; but such rumours of his peculiarities had gone before him, that the officials resolved not to receive him. The day on which he was expected a number of the leading friends were assembled in council at the house of a gentleman,² on whom he should have called, when placed in similar circumstances, a few years before. This is a singular coincidence, but it is by no means to be interpreted into a course of systematic opposition on the part of that gentleman to Mr. Sellars. At this juncture the gentleman was incidentally waited

¹ Eph. iv. 31.

² Mr. J. Page.

upon by a business friend¹ from a distance. "You know Mr. Sellars," said the former to the latter, "as I believe he travelled in your Circuit.² Now I want you to give our friends your honest opinion concerning him." The opinion was given, and was all that could be desired. A cab was immediately ordered, servants were sent to unlock the house, light the fires, and prepare for the reception of the new preacher, who, with his family, arrived in the course of a few hours. "The circumstance was remarkable," says the gentleman who had so opportunely served him, "as I had no previous knowledge of Mr. Sellars' appointment to Nottingham. Having done my business, I proceeded to his house, stayed the night, and much enjoyed an evening spent in singing and prayer."

It appears there were apprehensions that he would fail at New Basford, the second place in the Circuit, where the congregation was reported to be rather "stylish." One good lady in Nottingham had sad forebodings concerning the reception he would meet with there; she deeply sympathised with him, and earnestly prayed for him. To this place he went on the first Sunday evening, and, after the preliminary part of the service was gone through, the people sat down cosily to scan and criticise the new preacher. He soon, however, disarmed criticism, in fact, defied it; for, looking at them archly, he said, "I am not here to preach my trial sermon; for, let the sermon be what it may, you are saddled with me for twelve months. I have three or four good sermons,—at least I think so,—but I am not about to preach one of them to-night. You have had

¹ Mr. E. Dignum, of Frodsham.

² Northwich.

many good sermons from my predecessors ; and what good have they done you ? In looking over the Minutes I see you have been going down every year, with all your good preaching. Now I want to benefit you ; and if I think an exhortation, or the exposition of a psalm, or the singing of a hymn, will enable me to accomplish my purpose, I shall exhort, expound, or sing as, according to my judgment, the speciality of the case may require. Will that suit you ?” Several of his hearers, fully convinced of the honesty of his intention, said it would. A good work soon began amongst the young people, which Mr. Sellars fostered and encouraged to his utmost ability. “God’s work,” he would say, “is like a heavy shower of rain, which first moves the little stones, and then the great boulders, and thus it goes from the least to the greatest.”

A correspondent,¹ speaking of him when he was in the Nottingham Circuit, says, “Although his mode of address was somewhat eccentric, I could not but be pleased with his ardent zeal for the Divine glory, and his evident aim at the conversion of sinners. He was no idler. He was willing to be accounted a fool for Christ’s sake, if thereby he could win any. How earnestly, both in public and family prayer, did he agonise for the conversion of souls ! His openness, boldness, earnestness, and genuine kindness, all were ready to acknowledge and admire. Occasionally his mode of expression was deemed indiscreet ; but even his apparent indiscretions were, to the astonishment of those who condemned them, often overruled for good.”

¹ Rev. J. S. Nightingale. This gentleman generously adopted one of Mr. Sellars’ sons.

“If it be true that every good thing is really great, then despite his peculiarities Mr. Sellars was a great man. Through his instrumentality many in the Nottingham Circuit were brought to a knowledge of the truth. At Hyson Green and New Basford some remain to this day who are among the most useful and active members of the Church. He looked well after the young converts, and took a deep interest in their spiritual welfare.

“However stormy the weather might be, he would attend the band meeting at New Basford, a mile and a half from his home ; and, under the salutary influence of his presence, the numbers attending it so greatly increased, that ultimately it had to be held in the chapel. The first meeting held there will never be forgotten. Whilst at prayer the Holy Ghost suddenly moved the whole assembly in a manner never before nor since experienced. His spiritual children were accustomed to gather round him for counsel, and after service they frequently, as a singing escort, accompanied him on his way home.

“A mutual improvement class was conducted every Saturday evening in his own house ; and though it was a most inconvenient time for Mrs. Sellars, she always extended to its members a kind and cordial greeting ; indeed, to the free and social manner in which they were received, much of the benefit derived from the class may be ascribed. His mode of conducting it—in which he was assisted by an able local preacher to whom he had been made a great blessing—was somewhat unique. With a view to acquiring effect in its rendering, each member in turn gave out a hymn ; then, that there

might be order and comprehensiveness in their addresses at the throne of grace, each wrote a prayer containing the elements of adoration, thanksgiving, confession, supplication, and intercession; having done this, Mr. Sellars would say, 'Now you have got the form of prayer, but rest not till you obtain the power.' Subjects for discussion were brought before the class, and essays were read. Plagiarism he would not tolerate. To one who, without acknowledging it, had very complacently read a production which he had copied verbatim from a book, he said, 'Eh! Jack, cabbage water stinks.' Having made this not very elegant but stinging comment, he passed on to another subject. Instruction in theology was also given. By these means the new converts were built up in heavenly things.

"Another circumstance worthy of note, in connection with his labours in Nottingham, was the opening of his house for public religious worship; here he preached once a week for the benefit of the neighbourhood. The spirit that he manifested at a quarterly meeting, when some of the brethren had spoken uncharitably of him, was Christ-like, and the fervour with which he prayed for them is still remembered by the remaining few who were present."

"My own conversion," says the writer¹ from whose letter we have made the above extracts, "was one of the most remarkable in connection with the New Basford revival. Nine months after conversion, I commenced to preach the gospel; which I have continued to do from that time to the present, and intend to do, God being my helper, to the end of my days."

¹ Mr. H. Husband.

The brother-in-law¹ of the above gentleman informs us that he was converted in the same revival. "I well remember Mr. Sellars describing a sinner from whom God was taking His Spirit, and thereby he revealed my thoughts and feelings so accurately, that I concluded some one had told him all about me. I felt annoyed, and was strongly inclined to leave the chapel, yet I did not dare to do so; and in the after-meeting I gave myself to God. While under conviction of sin, Mr. Sellars said, 'I looked like one greatly bereft.' Owing to the spiritual outpourings he had experienced in the Basford Chapel, he regarded it as the dearest spot on earth."

There was living in Nottingham at that time a man² of extraordinary faith and zeal. In a journal kept by him we find the following entries, which throw some light on Mr. Sellars' labours:—

"*March 19th, 1852.*—We had a blessed band meeting; the young converts spoke well; two young men found peace.

"*March 14th.*—One conversion at New Basford, and one at Hyson Green. The latter was Mr. Smith's³ son John. On the Sunday night previous he had been hearing Mr. Sellars, and resisted the Spirit's operations; but a mighty conflict was going on in his soul whilst on the way home. Supperless he went to bed, and after laying an hour, he arose and cried mightily unto God. His shouts of glory brought his mother up-stairs, who inquired what was the matter. He answered, 'The Lord has set my soul at liberty;' and they rejoiced

¹ Mr. J. Taylor.

² Mr. Hiram Slack.

³ The inventor of the steam gauge.

together. His four brothers, two sisters, father, and mother are now all members of Society. Ride on, blessed Jesus, and save by families!

"March 24th.—Brother Sellars and myself paid friend Abbot a visit. After an hour's conversation, we sang and prayed, and received an answer as to how brother Sellars should act in relation to his next year's appointment. We received a glorious baptism of the Holy Ghost.

"April 4th.—The Sunday-school Anniversary. Mr. Garside, of Worksop, preached at night from 'The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.' He had great liberty, and in the prayer-meeting the Holy Ghost came down upon the people. Five or six cried for mercy, and obtained it.

"April 12th.—We had a large tea-party. Brother Sellars and myself addressed the people, after which we held a prayer-meeting, and four souls came up to obtain pardon.

"April 13th.—I had about sixty boys and girls at my class. A most impressive sight, and a blessed time.

"From April 12th to 24th, I saw no less than sixty sinners broken-hearted, and heard them inquire, 'What must I do to be saved?' The tears of penitents flowed freely, and as freely flowed salvation. A young woman who had made an engagement to go to a dancing-school, and was to have been there the night following, was by the Spirit drawn to God's house, and made to know her state and condition. Burdened and weeping, she came and found rest. This is one amongst a number of very good cases.

"*April 21st.*—Mr. Sellars preached about 'Blind Bartimæus,' after which there were ten or twelve conversions. At the Thursday night band meeting the chapel was full, and the experience of the young converts was highly pleasing. The same night there was a grand exhibition of fireworks at Nottingham, which it might be supposed would have drawn some aside, but I do not remember a single case of deviation.

"*April 25th.*—I preached at Hyson Green. We had a large congregation. The Spirit of the Lord came down in the prayer-meeting. Eight souls sought pardon; Satan raged; the conflict was severe. A robust woman came, full of fury, to seek her servant; but she found herself in the presence of God, and was glad to quit the chapel."

We have vivid recollections of the spiritual awakening in this place. Mr. Slack had spent years in praying and looking for it. One morning, after spending the whole night in intercession, he came to our house, and said, "Brother Sellars, we shall have a revival at Hyson Green, and it will be a *rum 'un*," which it certainly was. Satan did not relinquish his stronghold without a struggle. Whilst the services were being conducted in the chapel, uproar was going on outside, and grimacing faces were seen at the windows. In the building, the sheep were divided from the goats; at one end penitents were believing and rejoicing, and at the other sinners were wondering and scoffing. The boys, who held prayer-meetings on the racecourse and among the furze bushes during their dinner-hour, were sometimes hooted and pelted with sods; but the work advanced, and opposition seemed powerless in its presence.

Mr. Slack further records : " On April 27th, we had about one hundred and fifty present at class ; eight or ten souls were seeking mercy. The chapel was full of the presence of God ; and the throne of grace was easy of access.

" On Wednesday, Mr. Sellars preached, when six or eight souls sought the Lord ; and on Thursday the chapel was crowded. The Spirit moved powerfully ; many were under deep conviction, but they would not yield.

" On Friday, at New Basford, the Spirit's influence was most extraordinary ; it moved the people to pray and believe, and the noise was like the shout of a triumphant army.

" *May 9th.*—We have had a field-day. Mr. Sellars preached in the afternoon from the ' Prodigal Son,' and at night from ' He that being often reproved,' etc. The Word was powerful : and the service being over ' on the forest,' we repaired to the chapel, and ended the day victoriously. Many came and found pardon.

" *May 11th.*—I went to my class meeting. I have cause to remember that night ; it was the night of my eldest son's return from prodigality. The sight was affecting ; the victory was glorious. Twelve souls found peace. The whole town appeared to be moved by the power of God. The songs of God's people, borne upon the evening air, sounded like the music of the better land celebrating the prodigal's return.

" At Wednesday night preaching we had two conversions, and at Thursday night band meeting ten or twelve more. Oh, what sights and miracles of grace !"

From these fragmentary quotations, and the evidence furnished by those who have favoured us with their recollections of the religious awakening in Nottingham, it is obvious that it was one of great magnitude, and that, in *abiding fruit*, few will compare with it. On his last visit to New Basford, Mr. Sellars was informed, by one¹ whose knowledge of the facts was beyond question, that, even then, there were more of his spiritual children in that church than those of any other minister.

But while he rejoiced in Zion's prosperity, he was called to mourn the loss of one who had been a bright light in his home. He writes, "Tryphena's mother died at our house in Nottingham. She had always wished to end her days with us, and therefore, after her husband's death, she became a member of our family. During a long illness she patiently waited the Lord's time. One day, after family prayer, I remained in her room, and while singing,—

Let it not my Lord displease,
That I would die to be Thy guest ;
Jesus, Master, seal my peace,
And take me to Thy breast,—

I saw she was departing. I called Tryphena, who silently wept ; and we wiped away her mother's last tear."

Mrs. Sellars, at the time of her mother's death, was also the victim of a disease which medical testimony declared to be incurable. She was reduced to a skeleton, and at one time her life was not considered worth an

¹ Mr. Miller, father of the late Rev. Marmaduke Miller.

hour's purchase. During the crisis, her husband kept pacing the room, and repeating the verse,—

Better than my boding fears,
To me Thou oft hast proved :
Oft observed my silent tears,
And challenged Thy beloved :
Mercy to my rescue flew,
And Death ungrasp'd his fainting prey ;
Pain before Thy face withdrew,
And sorrow fled away.

When she was at the worst, a few friends assembled for prayer ; and such was their assurance that the sickness was not unto death, that Hiram Slack said, “ Be of good cheer ; ‘ she will not die, but live. ’ ” From that time she rapidly recovered. A powerful revival followed, and scores were converted.

CHAPTER IV.

HIS GETHSEMANE.

WHATEVER, at the commencement, might have been the doubts of some as to the propriety of Mr. Sellars' appointment to the Nottingham Circuit, long before he left it the opinion was unanimous that his services had been signally owned of God. And it is gratifying to know, that after a lapse of more than twenty years, fruits of his toil are still in no scanty measure to be found.

The system of changing ministers periodically, as existing among Methodists, generally harmonises with the tastes of the people. It may, however, be fairly questioned whether in the present day its advantages are equal to what they were formerly. Already the system has undergone considerable modifications. While in some sections of the Methodist family a statute of limitation is recognised, in others no such law exists. And the opinion seems to be gaining ground, that, to conserve the utility of the itinerancy, there must be nothing to interfere with its elasticity.

Its unbending severity in the past has frequently interfered with the prosperity of Churches ; has removed ministers from spheres of labour for which they were specially adapted, to spheres for which they were less

suited; has brought upon them anxieties uncongenial with their calling, and which have been more distressing than those the system was intended to obviate; and has also introduced an element of unrest into Circuits hurtful to piety, and obstructive to progress. On the other hand, it is alleged that in many instances, the three years' system has been the salvation of both ministers and Churches; that ~~to~~ to abolish it would be to interfere with the constitutional genius of Methodism, and what is worse than that—with its usefulness.

There is truth in both these statements. So far as we are able to judge, even those who deplore the baneful influence of the system, viewed in its severer aspects, would, if its existence depended upon their fiat, deprecate its abolition. Perhaps the greatest evil arising out of it is the desire for change which it generates, making the pulpit less comprehensive in its topics than it otherwise would be, and consequently less able adequately to meet the intellectual demands of the times. The work of a Church can only be done well where ministers and people intelligently sympathise, appreciate, and co-operate with each other. When either people or ministers are simply tolerated, the arrangement which brings them together becomes intolerable. Indeed, anything in a system which interferes with a Church's prosperity, to that extent vitiates its operation and mars its excellence. That the itinerancy has occasionally done this, the history of most Circuits and ministers will testify. How often has it happened that, for the want of mutual adaptation, useful men have been rendered comparatively useless, and the piety of Churches has languished? Hence it follows that an itinerancy, to

serve the Churches well, should be strictly worked with an eye to *utility*; neither years, nor whims, nor stipends should have anything to do with it. If a minister can serve a Circuit well for only one year, let him do so, and at the end of that period go elsewhere; if he can serve it well for five or ten years, let him remain for that period, and then change; but if for a lifetime, no change is required, nor should one be attempted.

The itinerancy, in Mr. Sellars' case, specially adapted itself to the order of his mind and work; but, like all other Methodist preachers, he was better adapted for certain Circuits than for others. And careful as he was to follow the guiding finger of Providence, his usefulness was not in all Circuits uniformly great. In the year 1852 he removed to Leeds; but his success in this Circuit was not equal to that which had accompanied his labours elsewhere. In a speech we once heard him deliver, he said, "When I went to Leeds, at the public meeting following the reception tea, a gentleman remarked, 'Now, let us go in for an increase of three hundred this year!' And how did they go about the work? Why, they went about it as you do. When the ordinary preaching service was over, instead of remaining at the prayer-meeting, many of them either walked home or visited their friends, and left the preacher to do the work; the consequence was a large decrease. In the spiritual world, as in the natural, God works according to fixed laws. 'Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.'"¹

¹ Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

A circumstance alluded to by a writer,¹ whose versatile pen has already enriched our pages, probably occurred when he was in the Leeds Circuit. "Being asked at an annual Assembly to account for a decrease of members in his Circuit, he stood in the aisle of the chapel and addressed the President thus: 'Behold, a sower went forth to sow: and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and, because they had no root, they withered away: and some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them.'² This was enough; most of the representatives were satisfied. For who could justly blame him when the cause was so lucidly explained by the Saviour in the parable?" But in this Circuit he was not without seals to his ministry. In the outlines of his sermons we frequently find it noted that this and that one had been blessed to the conversion of sinners.

At Lady Lane Chapel he gathered much inspiration from the responses of a devout and zealous brother.³ One Sunday morning, feeling much hampered in the delivery of his sermon, he turned round quickly, and said, "Come,"—mentioning the name of the brother,— "can't you shout glory?" "Yes," replied that brother, who was about as bluntly honest as himself, "when I hear anything worth shouting glory for." Those who witnessed this little episode testify that for a time it appeared to disconcert him.

¹ Rev. B. Glazebrook.

² Matt. xiii. 3-7.

³ Mr. Lucas.

"A certain incident," a correspondent¹ writes, "I cannot refrain from mentioning, which shows the generous and disinterested disposition of Mr. Sellars, and that he laboured, not for the things which perish, but for the reward that endureth. A few years ago, when stationed in the New Mills Circuit, he came to preach anniversary sermons in Leeds. The services were in every sense a success. Congregations were large; collections in advance of previous years; and two or three young persons found peace with God after the evening sermon. Every one felt thankful, and no one more so than Mr. Sellars. As a few friends at the close of the services were taking leave of him, the treasurer² of the trust fund inquired concerning his expenses. 'My railway fare,' said he, 'is so much,' mentioning the exact amount. The sum was paid; and he left the vestry in company with the treasurer. The friends remaining considered the bare railway fare was not a proper remuneration for coming so far and serving so well; and they knew it would be useless applying to the treasurer for a further grant out of the fund, as that gentleman guarded the exchequer most carefully; therefore they themselves subscribed a few shillings to present to Mr. Sellars as a token of their appreciation. The writer was deputed to wait upon him the following morning. On being introduced, he stated how much the Tabernacle friends felt indebted to him; and deeming the money he had received barely sufficient to meet his expenses, they had sent a small addition to it, which they hoped he would accept. 'My brother,' he replied, 'I thank you and the other friends

¹ Mr. W. Lakin.² The late Mr. Dalby.

most sincerely for your kindness, but I cannot take the money. Samuel Sellars never preached for gain, and he is too old to begin now. I am very glad you have done this, because it affords me the pleasure of declining it—a pleasure far greater than that of accepting it. My old friend did quite right in paying my expenses to the farthing; he knew me better than you did, and knew I should have declined to take the money had he offered me more. My Master pays me my wages, and He will never see His servant want.’ He then narrated many instances of the Divine favour and providential goodness; after which the writer took his leave, deeply impressed with the nobility of his character, and his strong reliance upon God.”

Of Leeds, he himself records: “In consequence of our large young family, Tryphena had nearly full employment in managing her house, and in so ordering affairs as to give no occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. Nevertheless, she was an assistant leader, and she also took an active part in raising a bazaar to aid the funds for erecting an infant school at the Tabernacle, the Sunday school being inadequate to accommodate the children.”

The following from the Rev. Thomas Hacking, first Principal of the Victoria Park Theological Institute, who was then his colleague, and which does not appear in the first edition of this work, is a graphic portrait of him at this period:—

“Mr. Sellars was the most original preacher in our Connexion. His sermons were full of rich humour, telling anecdote, and sound application. I had the privilege of hearing him twice, and was much struck

by the unexpected turns he sometimes gave to his discourse. Only as they linger in the mind of advancing age can I give reminiscences. Of course the striking manner and natural action—at times almost dramatic—which accompanied his utterances are wanting in these recitals. The first discourse was upon the text, Mark ix. 23, 'All thing sare possible to him that believeth.' After describing the various qualities of faith, and the degrees in which they existed, he proceeded to give illustrations. His first was that of Enoch: 'By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him.'¹ 'You have all heard of Green's balloon,—a famous aeronaut of the day,—how it soars aloft, penetrating the clouds and passing out of sight; but what is this compared to the balloon of faith to which Enoch was attached. It not only passed the clouds, but penetrated the starry firmament, and entered into the heaven of heavens itself. Truly he might have sung as he went up, "All things are possible to him that believeth."'

"His next was Noah: 'By faith Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house . . . and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.'² 'I remember when at Plymouth we sailed up the Sound, and crossing the bows of the *Victory*,—the flagship on which Admiral Nelson came to the end of his career,—I saw inscribed his last signal before the decisive battle of Trafalgar—"England expects every man this day to do his duty." It then occurred to me how appropriately

¹ Heb. xi. 5.² Heb. xi. 7.

might Noah have written on the bows of his ship as she floated over the waters, "All things are possible to him that believeth."

"After an appropriate reference to Abraham as being among the heroes of faith, he came to the case of Joshua: 'Whilst Joshua was pursuing the enemies of Israel, and before victory was fully secured, the sun began to decline toward the west. Then Joshua in the strength of faith exclaimed, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon."¹ Some assert that the sun never moves, while the earth rotates round it; and others affirm the contrary. Now, without pretending to settle that question, this is certain, that as Joshua's arms of faith were stretched out, one hand grasping the sun, the other the moon, and his feet upon the earth, he stood like a great triangle, and stopped the machinery—"All things are possible to him that believeth." The discourse was wound up by a close application, indicating the necessity of faith in securing victory over our natural and spiritual enemies.

"The second sermon was from Luke xix. 5: 'Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house.' The fragment I remember is the following:—'As Jesus was about to enter Jerusalem, He said within Himself, "I'll astonish the natives; for I'll cure their greatest cripple, and save their chiefest sinner." The cripple was Tim, the son of Old Tim, a blind man who was sitting by the wayside begging.'

"Here was given a graphic description of the cure. 'Now for the greatest sinner: this was Zaccheus.

¹ Josh. x. 12,

Zaccheus was a publican ; not the keeper of a public-house, but a Roman tax-collector, and therefore hateful to the people. He was small of stature, but much longed to see Jesus. In vain did he stand upon his toes, or jump up to catch a glimpse over the shoulders of the crowd ; neither could he see between them, they were too dense. Utterly baffled, he stood perplexed. Scratching his head, he pondered. "Ah ! now I've got it. He is going to Jerusalem, and He will pass that house-end. Beyond it there is a sycamore tree. I'll climb into that, and hide among the leaves, so I shall see Him pass under." No sooner said than done. Off he ran with his coat-tails swagging behind. Up the tree he went, and waited for the crowd. First came the bare-footed urchins, looking behind as they trotted on before the rest : they generally come first in a crowd. Then came the scribes and Pharisees. "Ah ! He's not among *them*," thought Zaccheus ; "they are too stuck up and proud. But I wonder how I shall know Him?" However, at length comes Jesus, with poor Tim who had lately been blind close behind, looking at the Saviour with intense and loving gratitude. When they came under the tree Tim said, "What is that ? A tree ; how beautiful ! Why do ye not all fall upon your knees, and thank God that you have been able to see such things all your life." Zaccheus perched above thought, "*That* must be Christ, but He cannot see me." However, just at that moment Jesus looked up, and brought him down with a double-barrelled gun. One barrel was OMNISCIENCE. He knew him,—"*Zaccheus, come down.*" The other barrel was GRACE. He loved him,—"*for this day I must abide at thy house.*" Well might Zaccheus so readily come down and receive Him joyfully. And

can we not here gather a lesson. Have not men generally to come down before Christ will save them? Must they not decrease in their own estimation before Christ will dwell with them?’

“Proceeding with the narrative, Mr. S. continued— ‘The crowd, observing Christ going with Zaccheus, began to make unfavourable comments. “He cannot be a good man, much less a prophet,” said one, “or He would never be seen in such company: Zaccheus is a sinner, a regular grinding tax-gatherer. Why, he was only in our neighbourhood yesterday serving writs.” “Yes,” said another, “there’s a writ sticking out of his coat-tail pocket even now.”’ Thus by translating ancient history into modern parlance a vivid picture was presented to his congregation. The discourse was concluded by pointing out the genuineness of Zaccheus’ conversion, as indicated by his proposal to make restitution where he had taken wrongly, and his benevolence to the poor.

“I am not aware that Mr. Sellars has left anything more than outlines of his discourses, though he spent much thought and care in their mental elaboration. He once told me that his method was—Under every head to make a statement of the truth; to give an illustration, or an incident; and then a confirmatory passage of Scripture. He was constantly gathering material as he moved about; and that more from observation than from books. For language he depended on the inspiration of the moment; in his happiest moods he was eminently rich and racy, and a rare treat to listen to; though it must be admitted that under depressing circumstances he sometimes disappointed his hearers. Preaching was the business of his life, and he rejoiced

in it. Eccentric he certainly was in his modes, but always centric in the great truths he sought to bring before the people."

In August 1855 he removed to Nantwich, in Cheshire. A poor porter was the friend who rendered him the last respectful attention on leaving Leeds; and a rich man was the first to show him attention on arriving at the railway station in his new Circuit: the respect of the latter being indicated by a brick-cart, which he had sent to convey him and his family a distance of several miles to Nantwich. It subsequently transpired that this gentleman had intended transporting the new preacher in a more elegant vehicle; but a pleasure party had desired the loan of it, and therefore the springless, jolting brick-cart was for once raised to distinction by becoming an ecclesiastical chariot.

Mr. Sellars had not been long in his new sphere of labour before he found that the "Jews"—the Wesleyans, had no dealings with the "Samaritans"—the Associationists. He, however, was above all bigotry of this sort, and determined to send his five boys to the Wesleyan day school. At the succeeding anniversary of this institution, being the greatest patron of the school, the committee invited him to be present. He readily accepted the invitation, and in his speech at the public meeting said, "My position reminds me of a man, who, being requested to take a seat in a shoemaker's shop, complied, and in doing so sat upon a ball of wax. Soon the heat drew out its adhesive qualities, so that when he would have risen he was constrained to keep his seat. Now I have always regarded Cheshire as the Manchester garden, and Nantwich¹ as the Manchester shoemaker's

¹ The manufacture of shoes is the staple trade of this town.

shop in that garden. This year our Annual Assembly has been pleased to give me a seat in this shop ; but, in occupying it, I find myself in the situation of the man described. On coming to this town, the first question was, to what school must I send my boys? And, after duly considering the cost and the advantages, I thought this to be the best. And now that results have confirmed my judgment, if solicited to leave this shop, I fear the school will, like the wax, constrain me to remain." This complimentary and racy speech was the death of old prejudice. A son of Mr. Sellars, at the request of the managers, became a pupil-teacher in this school, where he continued five years, and was brought to God through the instrumentality of a Wesleyan minister.¹

The Wesleyan Association chapel at Nantwich, at that time, was small, inconvenient, and antiquated. A movement was commenced by Mr. Sellars, which, by the sagacity and push of his successor,² resulted in the erection of the present elegant and commodious structure. Among the friends connected with that movement was one who was not contributing in proportion to his means. Mr. Sellars, being aware of this, warned and admonished the unfaithful steward, but there was no alteration for the better. Not long after his remonstrance, a fearful murrain destroyed more than half the delinquent's cattle. The sufferer requested Mr. Sellars to pray for the removal of the pestilence ; but that he sternly refused to do, unless a substantial proof was given of amendment. The stipulated donation, which he insisted upon more as a reproof of the person's selfishness than anything else, being forthcoming, he entered the cow-house, and whilst praying over an infected beast, the

¹ The late Rev. Mr. Oldfield.

² The Rev. G. Robinson.

animal raised its head, looked at him, rallied almost immediately, and ultimately recovered. Of all the beasts that were smitten, only that one got better, and the plague went no farther.

In this Circuit there were two parties. From those who constituted one party he received great kindness, and by them he was easily influenced. Not having a judicial mind, he readily believed their representations, espoused their cause, and thereby exposed himself to the persistent opposition of the other party. This was a mistake, for he was not the man to adjudicate upon the matter at issue, or to bring the dissentients to a right understanding ; as is clear from his identification with the one party to the annoyance of the other. By this connection a relentless, unprincipled opposition was provoked, which impaired his usefulness and saddened his heart. But, in spite of this untoward circumstance, his congregations improved, and a good work began. He, however, possessing none of the proclivities of the stormy petrel, could not live in an element of strife ; therefore he resolved to leave the Circuit at the end of his first year.

The events of this year left a gloomy record in the annals of Mr. Sellars' domestic history. In the autumn of 1855 two of his boys were startled by a sound of breaking branches, and a heavy thud on the ground, accompanied by a deep groan, proceeding from the orchard. Hastening to the spot, they found their father had fallen from a tree, from which he had been gathering fruit ; the chair upon which he had imprudently placed a short ladder having given way. He lay prostrate ; his face had a deathly pallor, but it was calm and assuring ; he lifted up an arm, the hand of which hung loose and powerless upon the wrist ; and then,

with a lustre of eye and a tone of voice never to be forgotten, he said, "My wrist and my back are broken; soon you will be without a father; but love and serve your father's God, and 'when your father forsakes you, the Lord will take you up.'" ¹ Mrs. Sellars coming up at this moment, he turned to her and said, "Thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is His name." ² A medical man was sent for, who, on examination, said, "The wrist is broken, but the back is not, though possibly the spine may be injured." The arm was set, and means were employed to check inflammation. At one time his condition was most critical. Mrs. Sellars went into an adjoining room, and told her grief to Him who alone could help her. She prayed, that if one must die, it might be herself, as she could not alone bear the burden of so large and young a family. Whilst thus engaged, she heard her husband call. The desired change had taken place; and in the night they sang praises to God. The process of cure was tedious and trying. For some time he was conveyed to his appointments in a bath-chair, and had to sit whilst preaching. But eventually he regained his health and vigour; and, excepting a lessened facility in writing, and unpleasant sensations on a change of weather, he sustained no lasting injury.

To this orchard misadventure Mr. Sellars refers in the memoir. We there read: "When I had fallen from the tree last October, my wife came to me as I lay. I said to her, 'Thy Maker is thine husband;' but she sat down, and with tears said, 'Nay, I cannot spare you,' and had faith to believe I should recover." But the alternative, which in prayer she had proposed, was about to be ac-

¹ Ps. xxvii. 10.

² Isa. liv. 5.

cepted. The event is thus narrated : "When we came to Nantwich last August, my wife's attention was directed to the improvement of the preacher's house, which she conducted with as much zeal as if she had received the command, 'Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live;'¹ and she had just got everything nearly to her wish, when she was called to her reward.

"On Whit Tuesday morning, she was awoke by hæmorrhage so excessive, that I thought she would instantly expire. These heavy attacks,—for which there was no remedy,—succeeded by much fever, rapidly reduced her strength. The doctor, having forbidden her to rise from bed, she was tempted to be impatient, when the following lines occurred to me, which at my dictation she committed to memory, and twice repeated :—

O Thou whose mercy guides my way,
Though now it seems severe,
Forbid my unbelief should say,
There is no mercy here.

Oh, give me to prefer the pain,
That comes in mercy down;
More than the world's supremest gain,
Succeeded by a frown.

Then, though Thou bring my spirit low,
There only can I see,
The very hand that strikes the blow,
Was wounded once for me.

"A few days after, as I sat in my study reading, I came to the words, 'She that hath borne seven languisheth; she hath given up the ghost.'² That text fastened upon my mind like a death-sentence. She gradually got worse. At length I ventured to say, 'Tryphena, you must give us up.' She replied, 'I must :

¹ 2 Kings xx. 1.

² Jer. xv. 9.

God knows I am not able to bear the burden of the children, so He is leaving you and taking me.' She further said, 'I feel that I have nothing of my own to plead ; but the Lord blessed me greatly while I was at prayer last Sunday.' The Lord was evidently preparing her for the end of her earthly sojourn, which was nigh ; for before the next Sunday she had a most dreadful shivering fit, and another attack of hæmorrhage, which took all her remaining strength. The nervous glancing of the doctor's eye, and the shaking of his head, told me human skill was unavailing. Her constant prayer was, 'Jesus, Thy will be done.' She rapidly sank into the arms of death, and in less than an hour expired.

"I went below, and told the children their mother had gone to heaven. I then took them up-stairs,—we knelt around the bed, and commended ourselves to the God of our life. Well ! Jacob had a similar bereavement ; and we agreed that if she should die, and the child were a son, he should be called Benjamin. Ezekiel, also, lost his wife suddenly. 'Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke. . . . So I spake unto the people in the morning ; and at even my wife died.'"¹

We have painful recollections of this sad scene ; of a mother's parting benediction ; of the five motherless boys—Joseph being away—surrounding the corpse of their best earthly friend ; and of one of the children mournfully inquiring, "Father, who will take care of us now when you go off preaching ?" Abraham's response was the answer, "My son, God will provide."²

"The fountain of public sympathy was everywhere opened ; spontaneous aid came from all sections of the

¹ Ezek. xxiv. 16, 18.

² Gen. xxii. 8.

Church, and from all classes of the community—publicans not excepted. People near and from afar came to the funeral in mourning attire, with money in their hands and compassion in their hearts. They bore all the expenses of the sickness and funeral, and have since erected a handsome tablet over the grave of a woman who was not the least noble of her sex."

The loss sustained by the family was great. Mr. Sellars writes: "She not only conducted family prayer during my absence, but she often talked and prayed with the children when she put them to bed; and on retiring for the night, she visited them again to see whether they were free from harm. The burden on her heart was their salvation. Those who met with her in class well remember her fervent pleadings for them; and the last tear was in her dying eye as she repeated the prayer,—

When soon or late we reach the coast,
O'er life's rough ocean driven,
May we be found, no wanderer lost,
A family in heaven."

The mental balance of Mr. Sellars was seriously affected by this heavy bereavement, and, for a time, a settled melancholy beclouded him. For months he conversed of little else but Tryphena, and never preached a sermon without alluding to her. He walked in the orchard, and in the cemetery at midnight, hoping she might appear to him; and he even lay upon her grave, and from it was conducted at two o'clock one morning, across a desolate moor, to his home.

Truly, there was deep significance in his language, when, in after years, he designated Nantwich—his "*Gethsemane*."

CHAPTER V.

A SWEET SPRING OF WATER.

THE darkest night, though its perils may be remembered, passes away; and so the night of sorrow, with its painful experiences, is succeeded by bright to-morrows. Much of the glory of the universe would be unperceived by us were it not for the world's night. The denser the darkness, the keener the frost that carries its chill where life is most sensitive, the clearer is the atmosphere, and the brighter and more numerous are the stars which appear. Some things are seen best, nay, can only be seen at all, through dark mediums. And while this is true of things natural, it is also true of some things spiritual, which only shine out brightest in the darkest phases of life through which we pass.

What lessons Mr. Sellars learned, while passing through the night of his "Gethsemane," we know not; but, when the shadows lifted, the sense of his loneliness was great. His love and that of his departed wife had been long and reciprocal. "Those who have loved longest love best. A sudden blaze of kindness may, by a single blast of coldness, be extinguished; but that love which length of time has connected with many circumstances and occasions, though it may be for a while suppressed, with or without a real cause, is often

revived by accidental recollection. To those who have lived long together, things hourly heard and seen, recall some pleasure communicated, or some benefit conferred; some petty quarrel, or some slight endearment. Esteem of great powers, or amiable qualities newly discovered, may embroider a day or a week; but a love of twenty years is interwoven with the texture of life." These sentiments, if not in so many words expressed by Mr. Sellars, were, for years, confirmed by his experience. The past with him was interwoven with his being, and its "sunny memories," with the dark hours that intervened, were never forgotten. Time might relieve the intensity of both, but obliterate them it could not.

His change of location, in 1856, placed him again among his old friends in the Barnsley Circuit. And notwithstanding the Circuit had undergone many changes for the worse during the ten years that had elapsed since his former appointment, perhaps it was, under the circumstances, the wisest arrangement that could have been made. Speaking of the religious condition of the Circuit, he says, "I found it, as in the first instance, a wreck." When he brought his former labours to a close at Barnsley, he administered the Lord's Supper to one hundred and thirty persons in the town chapel; but on renewing his labours in that place, at the first celebration of the ordinance, fewer than thirty were present. The fruit of his previous toil was found in most parts of the Circuit. At Mapplewell, nearly all the old members were his spiritual children, and a correspondent¹ tells us it is so to this day. His first visit to this village, in the year 1845, was notable. On entering it he inquired

¹ Rev. A. Sayer.

of a boy the way to the Wesleyan Methodist Association chapel. "I don't know," said the lad, "where that is. There's Fisher's Chapel; but nobody but old Fisher goes there." Discovering that the boy's designation was only an *alias* for the place he was seeking, and that his statement, though a little exaggerated, furnished a pretty correct idea of the low state of the Church and congregation, he set out to find the representative of both in the person of "old Fisher." This gentleman, as might be inferred from the high eulogy unwittingly pronounced upon him by the boy, was no weather-cock, but every inch a man. Having found the object of his pursuit, it was agreed to go where hearers were to be found. Singing through the place, they succeeded in attracting a crowd of young people and children to the chapel, and through them they reached their fathers and mothers; so that eventually the Church was increased, and the cause established. We have no particulars of his work during his last location in Barnsley; but we have been informed that he again saved the Circuit from spiritual declension.

Contemporary with his last year's service in this Circuit was the Sheffield revival, brought about mainly by the earnest labours of that honoured servant of God, the Rev. James Caughey. In that revival, the American evangelist was greatly assisted by Mr. Sellars. And such was the power of his ministrations on that occasion, that, in three services under his direction, seventy persons professed to seek and obtain a new heart. In revival work he seemed to be specially taught of God. At a meeting where many anxious inquirers were present, a person, who thought him too slow in his

movements, impatiently addressed him thus: "Mr. Sellars, why don't you go among the people?" He replied, "I want God to go first, and then I will go." Mr. Caughey frequently expressed a high appreciation of his character and aid, and honoured him with his private confidence whilst in Sheffield.

Being put down in the first draft of the stations of 1858 for Launceston, Cornwall, he strongly opposed the appointment; but, as he could not succeed in getting it altered, he was compelled to submit. When the appointment was finally ratified, he curiously inquired of Mr. Caughey, "What did you dream about last night?" That gentleman replied, "I dreamt I saw a sweet spring of water." "Then," said he, "I hope it may be in Cornwall." "Go," replied Mr. Caughey, "and God will bless you." "He had a great aversion," says one of his friends,¹ "to go to Cornwall, and opposed it as far as he possibly could. He appealed to the Connexional authorities, and wished to know if they meant to tear his body and soul asunder by forcing him from his children, some of whom were settled in the north. 'There was, however,' he said, 'no alternative, God was determined to make me comply by blocking up my way to every other place, as in the case of Paul when there was work for him to do in Macedonia.'" The same writer informs us that he once asked him, when meeting him in the west, whether the entire subjection of the will to God was not the highest state of grace? He said "Yes," and significantly added, "God had a great deal of trouble with my will when He sent me here. I was resolved I would not come to Cornwall, but

¹ Rev. B. Glazebrook.

He made me, and now I would not have failed to come for a hundred pounds."

"On his arrival in the town of Launceston," writes his first Cornish friend,¹ "after a long journey, before taking any refreshment, he and a part of his family went into the chapel, and there on his knees he committed himself, his family, and the Circuit, into the hands of God. The first two years of his ministry amongst us were considerably owned and blessed. A more mighty man in prayer I never knew." In his prayer there was nothing formal. He never, as one of his Cornish converts² would put it, "required a quarter of an hour to hack his way to the throne of grace," but he simply and confidently approached God.

Another correspondent,³ who first made his acquaintance in this Circuit, observes: "Mr. Sellars was a person whose talents were entirely devoted to the glory of God; who was superior to the fear of man; who found his supreme joy in saving souls; and who was so strikingly singular in all his habits of thought, speech, and manner, as to render him different from everybody else in the world. He was indeed *homo sui generis*.⁴ His appointment to Launceston formed quite an epoch in the history of the Circuit. After his arrival, not many days had elapsed ere it appeared to the least discerning that a remarkable messenger had been sent to the western Churches. And no man appeared to know better than he did that the curiosity excited amongst the people by the presence of a new minister might be, and should be, used for their spiritual benefit. Accordingly, he at once set

¹ Mr. J. Nicolls.

³ The Rev. W. H. Bond.

² Peter Sigley.

⁴ A man of his own kind.

about preparing for a revival. The revival came, and was accompanied with much power. Believers, old and young, were quickened ; ministers spoke with a new accent of conviction ; new preachers went into the pulpits ; and a large number of persons were admitted into Church fellowship, not a few of whom live in the enjoyment of this privilege to the present moment. It may be safely said that the impressions and results of this awakening will never be forgotten by those who shared in it as long as they live.

“Mr. Sellars’ manner of conducting public worship was frequently very impressive, and such a desire to hear him prevailed that the chief part of the congregation was usually assembled ere he entered the chapel, and till he arrived many restless eyes were turned to the door. But as he walked slowly and reverently up the aisle and ascended the pulpit, mere curiosity gave place to a feeling akin to awe, and a solemn hush not unfrequently fell upon the whole people. His prayers were the out-gushings of his heart ; they expressed his own feelings and the wants of the people just at that very moment, and, as he pleaded the promises and the atoning blood of Christ, tears might often be seen trickling down his face. The worship of praise was highly appreciated by him ; he evidently loved to adore Jehovah in holy song ; and he possessed a voice of uncommon richness, flexibility, and compass. In reading the Scriptures and Wesley’s hymns, he had attained a perfection which is seldom surpassed. His whole soul seemed to be thrown into his reading, and his rendering shed upon the page a new light. He once read the narrative of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus with a pathos

and sympathy that melted the hearts of all who listened ; and he always read with a power and unction that showed how far the Scriptures surpass all other books in forcible diction and majestic thought. His sermons were very unequal ; it must also in candour be confessed that his ready wit was occasionally ill-timed, and his anecdotes ludicrous. Hence the taste of some persons was offended, and the gravity of the whole audience upset. Notwithstanding this, Mr. Sellars was a genuine preacher, swift to comfort the weary and sorrowful, and powerful to denounce evil-doers of every class. Few men, who were determined to continue in unrighteous practices, would sit long under such a ministry.

“Neither did Mr. Sellars brandish a weapon in the pulpit which he declined to unsheath when he came out of it. Everywhere, and at all times, he was wont to reprove and rebuke if he thought it necessary. The frowns of neither rich nor poor did he fear, and he disdained the consideration of personal consequences. At a meeting convened to settle a dispute between two leading members of the Church, one of the aggrieved, who made a loud profession of religion, but was withal much inclined to pick quarrels and to use abusive words, became somewhat obstreperous, to the confusion of the business of the meeting. Believing the man to be decidedly in the wrong, Mr. Sellars could be silent no longer, and in calm, firm tones, but with a decidedly Derbyshire accent, he said, ‘Now, sir, be quiet ; I have something to say to you. I have watched you these two years, and find there is no Holy Ghost about you.’ This was the opening of such a volley of incisive rebuke as almost annihilated the delinquent, who was completely

cowed under the words of his righteous censor, and forthwith forsook the chapel."

"At Boyton," Mr. Sellars informs us, "Caughey's sweet spring of water first gushed forth." He adds—"While I was preaching from the following text, the promise contained in it was fulfilled before my eyes: 'I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.'¹ During the sermon the Holy Spirit came upon us as showers that water the earth. Before I had done they—sinners seeking Jesus—began to spring up as mushrooms among the grass; and so loud were the pleadings of penitents and the rejoicings of believers, that I was compelled to close my discourse and begin the prayer-meeting." The good work thus commenced went on with marvellous power, so that when he left the Circuit, "there were the names of several persons on the preachers' plan who had been brought to God in that revival."

When travelling in Cornish Circuits, he was in great requisition for special sermons and public meetings, and wherever he went deep spiritual influence accompanied his labours. To the Tavistock² Church he was especially rendered a great blessing. He rarely ever visited a place without introducing a melody. "In Redruth he taught the 'Poor Negro' to fifteen hundred people in

¹ Isa. xliv. 3-5.

² The Rev. E. D. Green.

less than a quarter of an hour ; and shortly after it was heard in the homes of all classes, and even in the public-houses.”¹ On missionary tours he usually had one or two of his melodies printed on a card, many hundreds of which he sold for the benefit of the mission fund. We have known him, heated and wearied, sit by a village well, and there, by the effective rendering of a simple hymn, attract the natives in groups around him ; we have seen their eyes alternately soften with tears and sparkle with joy, have heard their sobs and then their laughter, as by his vocal and witty powers he played upon them ; and we have seen, in response to a request for water, milk, Cornish pasty, and other luxuries from the varied pantries laid before him. And when he has pursued his journey, women and children with lingering look have watched him, till a turn in the lane has hid him from their view.

Being at Mousehole, he visited the dwelling-place of the late Benjamin Carvosso. His reminiscences of that holy man, whose motto was, “ Have faith in God,” filled him with ecstasy ; and he requested the inmates of the house, who were busily employed with their domestic pursuits, to allow him to pray in the room which had been consecrated by the fervent and believing pleadings of this pious, laborious, and useful Christian.

A letter has been furnished by a gentleman,² so graphically and truly descriptive of Mr. Sellars and his work at this time, that, although some portions of it contain a kindredship of sentiment with what has already been expressed, conceiving concurrent testimony on certain particulars to be necessary, we here introduce it.

¹ Mr. T. Summerside.

² The Rev. R. Gray.

The writer proceeds thus: "I first knew Mr. Sellars simply as a preacher, and distinctly remember the first service I heard him conduct. It was in my native town on a week-day afternoon, in connection with a Missionary Anniversary. He had recently come into the county; much excitement prevailed in his own Circuit—Launceston, which was some thirty or forty miles distant from my home; large numbers were being brought to Christ, and the news was spreading far and wide, so that for special services of various kinds he was in great request. His fame having preceded him, a large congregation gathered; we had a happy time, and a very deep impression was produced. His theme was the love of God in Christ Jesus; a few quaint things did he utter which raised a smile, but, compared with the entire sermon, the drollery was as a single hair in a full cup of cream: and it was cream. In the evening we had a public meeting, where he related a funny anecdote, and taught the young people a hymn and tune, and thus our part of the country was set a-singing. For weeks and months, in cottages and country lanes, from groups of working men and maidens, Sellars' hymns were heard sweetly floating on the mid-day and evening air; everybody was singing of 'Heaven the Happy' and 'Jesus the Great.' From this flying visit undoubtedly lasting good resulted.

"A few years after, I was present at the opening of a new chapel in the North of England; Dr. David Thomas, of London, was officiating, and my attention was attracted by a venerable presence in the body of the chapel. I had not the least recognition of the singing preacher, but supposed that the editor of the *Homilist* had drawn some Church dignitary for once into a Dis-

senters' meeting-house. At the close of the morning service, I found that it was the veritable preacher of former days, full of kindness, and his face beaming with the holy peace which flows from an entire trust in God. He had been appointed to a neighbouring Circuit, and a friendship commenced between us which became more frank and firm month by month. I now heard him preach frequently. The services he conducted were marked by deep spiritual feeling ; and his rich Christian experience, together with a close and constant study of the word of God, illumined the text, so as to render its hitherto hidden meaning clear and unquestionable. As might be expected, the expository help afforded, related to some deeply spiritual and not historical truth. Every man in his own order ; and to complain, as critics too often do, that a certain person was not this, that, and the other thing, may be to complain of the man's Maker rather than of the man. Was he himself ? And if so, was he not a faithful steward whose fidelity in the little shall be rewarded with the larger trust. During two years I had frequent opportunities of a closer acquaintance with his life. I saw how little he cared for general literature, but how regularly he read his Bible ; with what reverence he was regarded by his family, and how, after a brief absence, his footstep was the signal of some small luxury and great gladness ; how each recurring meal was preceded, and followed, by the singing of some hymn of praise ; how fervently he prayed for his household and with it ; and how natural, happy, and holy a family life it was.

“To reproduce any of his sermons would be a difficult task. He used to say that he never wrote but one

paper, and that was in his earlier days. I have a few outlines which he gave me with their divisions and subdivisions, their hymnal references and illustrations, but they are so many hieroglyphics, the meaning of which was lodged in his own marvellous memory. As Macaulay said of Dr. Johnson, we may safely say of Mr. Sellars,—‘He will live, not in his words, but in his character.’ It is that which has made so deep an impression upon us all. We shall tell our children of him when we speak of the recollections of our youth,—of his voice how sweet! of his presence how imposing! of his piety how unmistakable! And when some future Thomas Jackson shall become the biographer of Liberal Methodism, and his able pen shall furnish us with records of the lives of those whose foresight and devotion gave the direction and impulse of our denominational course, the name of Samuel Sellars will rank high among the giants of those days.”

At Launceston, in the summer of 1861, he married his second wife, Miss Elizabeth Hatton, of Winsford, in Cheshire, who survives him, and of whose worth much might be said. Shortly after, he removed to the St. Columb Circuit. His farewell service we shall never forget; it was like the parting of Paul at Miletus; the chapel was a “Bochim,” and sobs were audible in many parts of the large congregation. The following morning, the vehicle that was to convey himself and family to St. Columb was surrounded by a number of sorrowing friends, some of whom accompanied it for miles along the road. Of the details of his work in the St. Columb Circuit we are ignorant; but it was once our privilege to witness, under his instrumentality, a gracious quickening and increase in the principal church of that Circuit.

CHAPTER VI.

RETURNS NORTH.

RELUCTANT as Mr. Sellars was to submit to an appointment to a Cornish Circuit, it is evident that he afterwards did not regret having been sent thither. His ministry was never more appreciated ; never more effective. And when the time came for him to retrace his steps, and serve a northern Circuit, it was not without the tenderest lingerings, which, perhaps, if his feelings had been consulted, would have caused him to tarry in the west.

Not that he was exempt from hardships. The Circuits in which he travelled covered a large area, and involved much walking and exposure ; the salaries paid never exceeded the minimum scale of Connexional allowance ; his family being large, he could not meet his expenditure, which of all things was most painful to his honest feelings ; but what to him was more than a compensation for the inconvenience and privation he endured, was the success of his ministry. He was prepared to make any amount of personal sacrifice, so long as "the word of the Lord had free course, and was glorified."¹ Whether or no the Circuits he served were so poor that they were unable to minister more abundantly to his temporal necessities, we cannot determine. If they

¹ 2 Thess. iii. 1.

were, no blame attaches to them ; if they were not, the meanness, or inconsiderateness, which allowed a faithful, energetic, and successful minister of the gospel of Christ to be so poorly remunerated as to render it impossible, after practising the most rigid economy, for him to meet his family exigencies, cannot be too strongly condemned.

By the Assembly of 1863 he was appointed to Bacup, in Lancashire. His brother minister¹ in that Circuit says, "I spent two happy years with Mr. Sellars, and found him an excellent colleague. At Newchurch, during the first winter, many were brought to God, and his services were made a great blessing. Other places in the Circuit had a similar Divine visitation, and no one laboured more earnestly and rejoiced more heartily than he did.

"His 'preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.'² Occasionally I heard him preach, and what has been said of the late Thomas Binney might with great propriety be said of him, namely, 'That he could either preach a very poor sermon, or one of surpassing power.' He was most unequal. At times his influence over the congregation surpassed anything I had ever seen. I well remember a sermon of marvellous power from the text, 'Be not afraid, only believe.'³ The exposition was good, the illustrations were apt and forceful, and the closing appeal was most thrilling. The congregation was profoundly moved, and the influence of that service can never die.

"He was extremely charitable and free from jealousy.

¹ The Rev. G. Turner, now Connexional Missionary Secretary.

² 1 Cor. ii. 4.

³ Mark v. 36.

He liked to speak well of the 'young man,' to encourage him all he could, and to give him his full share of credit for any work done in the Circuit.

"The pulpit and the class meeting were to him more congenial places than the chair of a business meeting. He was impulsive, and, in some instances, lacked judgment, yet I never knew one more transparent. Of duplicity he knew nothing. His plainness of speech might not at all times be agreeable, but his purpose was unquestionable. In him piety and devotion were ever conspicuous, and all with whom he associated were impressed with his ripe Christian character and high spiritual life."

During his sojourn in this Circuit, two incidents occurred which showed his fearless honesty and thorough conscientiousness. A few Sunday-school scholars having been summoned to appear before the magistrates for throwing stones, their mothers requested Mr. Sellars to intercede for them. When he entered the court-room, he found the Bench engaged in fining drunkards, and granting licences to publicans. Struck with their folly in putting up with one hand and pulling down with the other, he cried aloud, "Here you are licensing the cause, and punishing the effect ; cut off the cause, and the effect will cease." Whereupon there was a cry of order, and one of the presiding justices desired him to remember he was not in the pulpit. Shortly after, the two gentlemen were placed in different circumstances ; Mr. Sellars was on the platform at a Bible Society meeting, and the said magistrate was among the audience. Seizing the opportunity, the former, looking straight at his censor, said, Every dog can bark in his own kennel, and now that I

have the muzzle off, and it is my turn, let me say, the objects of the Bible Society would be greatly promoted, if some in this audience would, in their official capacity, discountenance a traffic which, more than any other, obstructs the progress of gospel truth."

The second incident took place towards the close of his ministry at Bacup.¹ Returning home by train from a week-night appointment, on giving his ticket to the collector, he said, "This is probably the last ticket you will ever require me to deliver up; but you never received one from me on a Sunday; and if all the passengers who have frequented this station could say the same, then your duty would never have prevented you attending God's house on the Lord's day." The collector confirmed the statement, and also expressed a desire that others would follow his example.

In August 1865 Mr. Sellars was appointed to the Rochdale Circuit. "I well remember," says the correspondent from whom we have just quoted, "the first time he met brother Cryer's class for tickets. He commenced with the leader and ended with myself. On coming to me he said, 'Well! I do declare, this is remarkable,—a local preacher at the beginning of the class and another at the close. Now, brother Cryer,'—turning to him,—'you must cry onward, as you lead to heaven's clover-fields; and you, brother Turner, must be like the faithful sheep-dog, at the heels of those that lag behind; and between you this flock must be kept safe, and brought to the heavenly pastures.'

"He frequently visited the poor, and, to the utmost of

¹ Furnished by Mr. E. Turner; now the Rev. E. Turner, of Ballarat, Australia.

his ability, helped the needy. I met him on a Christmas week seeking out necessitous cases for the purpose of relieving them, and, knowing that he was characterised more by benevolence than by prudence, I suggested he had better check his benevolent impulses by considering his own family. He smilingly replied, 'I have had a large goose sent me by some kind friend, so I am giving the mutton-money away'—referring to the cash he spent weekly at the butcher's—'to those less favoured than myself.'"

One of his oldest friends, and then colleague¹ in this Circuit, writes, "I was with him at the funeral of the late Rev. James Edgar. Mr. Sellars and he had been bosom friends. At the house he read the Scriptures with wonderful effect; and at the grave, when the vicar had closed the service, he delivered a most touching address. The clergyman remarked to me, 'Your departed friend must have been a good and useful minister of the Lord Jesus.'

"At the funeral of Mrs. Petrie, of Rochdale, the Circuit ministers attended. There were from sixty to seventy persons present. Mr. Sellars, standing in our midst, read part of the fourth chapter of the First Epistle to the Thessalonians. The occasion will not soon be forgotten. His knowledge of Scripture was extensive, and in prayer he could use it with uncommon effect.

"At a revival meeting in Baillie Street schoolroom, when showing the importance of improving special seasons of grace, he said, 'The first time I saw brother Townend, who sits there,'—pointing to my seat,—'was in the town of Hull. I had never seen a dock before I

¹ The Rev. J. Townend, formerly of Australia.

nt to that place ; and one day observing a ship on
: stocks in a dry dock, I inquired as to how she was
be got into the river, when I was told that at high-
e the dock would be filled with water, and she would
at.' Then in his peculiar way he exclaimed, 'Now,
nitents, it is high-tide ; now is the accepted time ;
nold, now is the day of salvation.'¹

'On Monday night, preaching on entire sanctification,
: congregation consisting chiefly of the working class,
said, 'You women were very likely sorting linen for
: wash this morning.' And suiting the action to the
ords he stepped from behind the table, and, as if the
sket of dirty clothes were on one side and the wash-
o on the other, he stooped, took up a garment, and
oking at it said, 'Oh, that is not very bad, it will do
ain.' And having taken up several imaginary gar-
ments, over which he made the same remark, with a
ght deviation, he at length came to one which, casting
o the tub, he exclaimed with emphasis, 'That is
hy dirty.' 'That,' said he, 'is how *you* are doing.
stead of coming to God for entire purity, you are
ying, *I shall do* ; whilst sinners of the deepest dye seek
d obtain that washing which you think you do not
ed.'

'Fastidious hearers were at times uncomfortable under
: ministry, fearing he would indulge in figures which
re beneath the proprieties of the pulpit ; which, in
th, he sometimes did. Others, however, heartily
joyed his preaching ; and among rural congregations
was highly popular.

"As a brother minister, I had for him a real affection,

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 2.

and hope ere long to join him and the 'Church triumphant.'"

Another of his colleagues¹ in the Rochdale Circuit writes, "My acquaintance with Mr. Sellars extended over the last nine years of his life. We became colleagues at the Annual Assembly of 1865, and from that time a close friendship began, which continued without interruption until his death. During a portion of the period we laboured as colleagues, we were near neighbours, and very frequent opportunities were therefore afforded me of seeing him, not only in public, but also in private life. The more I knew of him, the more I esteemed him; and though often in matters of taste, judgment, and procedure I could not agree with him, yet my respect for him continually increased, and I shall ever greatly revere his memory.

"Of him I have many pleasant reminiscences, a few of which I will briefly note. From the first I was impressed with his sincere and earnest piety; and nothing occurred to destroy that impression, but, on the contrary, it was confirmed and deepened by subsequent intercourse. It was impossible to be long in his company without feeling that with him religion was the supreme concern; that he lived in communion with God, and participated in the peace and enjoyment of the higher spiritual life. He was a diligent and prayerful reader of the Bible. It was to him the 'Book of Life,' and he perused it for itself and its spiritual benefits. Modern doubts did not shake his faith in any part of it, he received it most fully as the Word of God,

¹ The Rev. A. Holliday, Ex-President; now Principal of the Theological Institute, Manchester.

and no amount of adverse criticism could disturb him. This love for the Scriptures gave freshness and constancy to his piety.

“Nothing about him struck me more than his strong and unwavering confidence in God. When any matter of temporal or spiritual difficulty arose, he laid it before the Lord in prayer, and never had the shadow of a doubt with reference to relief being sent. I have known him in circumstances that were severely testing, when most men would have been despondent, but he continued in trustful cheerfulness. He believed the promises, and rested on them ; and I am cognisant of several instances when his faith was most signally honoured.

“To gloom he was a stranger ; his countenance was bright, and often beaming with joy. He was, I think, the happiest Christian I ever knew ; sadness or melancholy could not be where he was. By a sally of wit, by the narration of some experience, or by a hymn of praise, he would dispel the gloom, and diffuse the glow of pleasure all around. His own hearth was a bright and pleasant spot ; and his children, while not daring to attempt liberties, were full of innocent freedom and gladness in his presence. We paid frequent visits to his home, and retain bright memories of what we there witnessed and enjoyed.

“There are other salient features, such as his transparency, conscientiousness, and generosity, on which I might remark, but a word must suffice. His was a self-revealing nature ; he could not be hypocritical or deceitful ; his character was clear as the light. Of his generosity and hospitality, I can only say, that in many

instances they carried him to an extent not justified by his means. Cases of distress touched his sympathies, and his feelings were allowed to overpower his judgment. Like Sammy Hick, he would give away the cream as well as the milk. In this, as in other things, he frequently erred in judgment, but his impulses and intentions were always right.

“Of Mr. Sellars as a preacher what shall I say? Only on two occasions had I the opportunity of hearing him; and as both sermons, I understand, were thoroughly characteristic and fair specimens of his style, I was, at any rate, enabled to form a good idea of his mode of treatment and address. After listening to him, I did not wonder that ‘the common people heard him gladly.’¹ If his sermons did not evince profound thought, and extensive knowledge of books, they unmistakably showed that he was familiar with his Bible from end to end, and that he was possessed of deep spiritual experiences. His apt and even striking illustrations, mostly drawn from everyday life; his natural free-and-easy style; the not unfrequent strokes of humour; the flashes of deep spiritual insight; and the unexpected verse of a hymn sung in his own sweet way, made the services at once interesting, impressive, and profitable. His eccentricities were very marked; and in one part of his sermon his humour carried him away, and moved his congregation to loud laughter; but these features were a part of himself, were perfectly natural, and in thorough keeping with the character of the man.

“The text on one of the occasions alluded to was, ‘But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good

¹ Mark xii. 37.

thing.’¹ The sermon contained several excellent and telling points. In speaking of zeal, he explained it as meaning *boiling hot*; and then, in a very earnest manner, he exhorted all to cultivate it, and closed this part of his discourse by declaring that ‘such a religion would scald the devil.’ Towards the end of the sermon, he became very happy, and rose to true eloquence. One of his illustrations was very good. He told us that, when on a journey in one of his Circuits, the heavens were gloomy, and the weather rough; before him was a short tunnel through which he had to pass, but, on approaching it, he could see through the darkness to the other side, and there was beauty and sunshine. To this experience did he then liken the Christian’s when drawing near to the ‘valley and shadow of death,’ and showed how religion could sustain under present trials, and in the prospect of a passage through the dark tunnel of the grave, by revealing the glory which awaiteth beyond it. Excited and borne away by the picture of heaven which he had drawn, he struck up the hymn,—

On the other side of Jordan,
In the sweet fields of Eden,
Where the tree of life is blooming,
There is rest for you,—

in the singing of which the congregation most heartily united. The chorus,—

There is rest for the weary,
There is rest for you,—

was repeated again and again; the effect was perfectly electrical. I have never witnessed anything like it either before or since.”

¹ Gal. iv. 18.

CHAPTER VII.

JACOB'S LADDER.

THE colleagues of Mr. Sellars, with few exceptions, as may in part be gathered from the testimony already furnished, held him in high esteem. Few men aimed more at conformity to the apostolic injunction, "In honour preferring one another,"¹ than he did. Young and old who preached Jesus, he loved for their work's sake. He never arrogated to himself credit at the expense of another; never environed himself with a fence of ecclesiastical assumption and dignity, which would have made everybody around him uncomfortable; and never allowed his lips to utter inuendoes or dark sayings that might be interpreted to his colleague's hurt; nor would he allow others to do so in his presence without rebuke. As a minister, he moved among his brethren without feelings of restraint, and was most respected by those who understood him best. By some he was misunderstood; his eccentricities they could not tolerate. Nor is this a matter of surprise. There are minds which can only enjoy quiet undulating plains and well-trimmed lawns; while others, more diversified in their taste, regard hills and dales, rocks and tarns, peaks and scaurs, as things of joy for ever. Lynx-eyed jealousy had

¹ Rom. xii. 10.

no power over him ; he envied no man's popularity, but for the sake of the Master rejoiced in the success of others. He was a friend to be coveted, and not a few prized his friendship as among their most precious treasures.

His views of the ministry, and the Church's supremacy, were, what some would consider, extreme. The Church, in his estimation, did not exist for the ministry, but the ministry for the Church ; nor did Circuits exist for the Connexion, but the Connexion for Circuits. The Connexional element, according to his judgment, was circumstantial and not essential ; and, therefore, while it might in some respects be made conducive to the organic action of a Church, it was by no means essential to its existence. These views led him to subordinate himself and everybody else to the Church ; and so far as Connexionalism served the Circuits he approved and supported it, but no further. The Church he regarded as the supreme court ; the Circuit quarterly meeting as next in importance ; and the Annual Assembly as the servant of both. His Church views being thus clearly defined, he could not tolerate any person or persons who were anxious to assume the functions of the Church. "Let the Church, or the Circuit," he would say, "do its own work ; I respect the voice of the Church ; but, as no man constitutes the Church, I will not submit to any man who assumes its functions." He was no pope himself, nor would he allow either a rich man or a poor man to play off popish pranks, under the semblance of freedom, without unmasking him. One of his *eccentricities* was to put sharp thorns into the sides of all would-be "lords over God's heritage" ;¹

¹ 1 Pet. v. 3.

and *this eccentricity* was the most fruitful source of his ministerial troubles. How far he was right, we leave those to determine who believe in the battle-cry which years ago was heard in our midst, "Be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren."¹

We proceed to narrate that in August 1868 Mr. Sellars removed to the Cross Hills Circuit, from which we have no communication. The latter part of the Rev. R. Gray's letter, already inserted, relates to that appointment.

Since the first edition of these memoirs was issued, the following has been furnished us as occurring during his residence in this locality:—It appears that one Saturday when going to the railway station, with a view to taking the train for Bradford, at which town he was to preach on the following day, he was informed that one of the oldest members of the Cross Hills Church was seriously ill. At once he turned aside to see him; and finding the sufferer destitute, parted with all the money he had in his possession. "The *enemy*," said he, "was very busy on resuming my journey to the station, inquiring if I thought *the Company* were going to give me a free ticket in consideration of my great generosity." To which I made answer, "That it was no matter to concern either of us. I had simply done my duty to a needy brother; and if the Lord intended me to preach at Bradford, means of conveyance would be provided.

"At that moment brother A., coming out of the station, thus accosted me: 'Tis strange, but the moment I saw

¹ Matt. xxiii. 8.

you a voice said, "There is Mr. Sellars, and you must give him a sovereign."'

"'It's all right,' I replied, and explained my situation."

After continuing in Yorkshire two years, he was the second time stationed at New Mills in 1870.

A minister,¹ who in this Circuit became his colleague, writes, "I had just returned from East Africa shattered in health, and was ordered to settle for a while somewhere amongst the hills. New Mills having been suggested to me, I went, on a Saturday afternoon, to visit Mr. Sellars, hoping he might be able to recommend me to suitable lodgings. No sooner had I introduced myself to him, than he, with a radiant smile and a hearty grip of the hand, welcomed me, and at once made me at home. After explaining my errand, he told me that the Circuit had been unable to secure a second preacher, so that his rooms would be at liberty; and he kindly volunteered to go with me to the person who had them to let; but on reaching the station we found there would be no train for two hours. We then visited the Circuit secretary, when it transpired that no provision had been made for the second preacher's appointments at Mellor the next day. I proffered to return from Manchester on the morrow to supply them, and my offer was accepted. Mr. Sellars then gave me a note of introduction to Mrs. Pridham, of Mellor, and informed me that I was to be her guest on the Sabbath; he also requested that I would meet him at her house for tea on the Tuesday following. We met on that day, and, while sitting round the fire, Mr. Sellars, turning to Mrs. Pridham, said, 'This young man will have to stay with

¹ The Rev. W. Yates.

you.' I was amazed, and about to express my astonishment, when he cut me short by saying, 'Be quiet, this is my business.' Then addressing the lady, he added, 'This young man has been to Africa, and, whilst doing the Lord's work his health broke down, and now he needs nursing. He has no home; and no relative to care for him; so God has sent him to you. You are well able to nurse him, and have nothing else to do; look well after him, and the Lord will reward you.' He spoke with such authority that there was no gainsaying him. He had evidently prayed about the matter, and came armed with a Divine commission. From that time I felt myself much indebted to him; for to his ready sympathy and earnest prayers, together with my kind nurse's careful attention, do I mainly owe my restoration to bodily health. Two years after, at a missionary meeting, looking at me through tears, he said, 'Eh! what a poor half-dead creature he was when I first saw him at New Mills. But now look at him; how great the change; and all through the blessing of God, Mrs. Pridham, and Derbyshire milk!'

"After two or three months' rest, I was enabled to take the place of second preacher, and so had the privilege of becoming his colleague. For a considerable time I lived with him; and to my dying day I shall bless God that His good providence ever led me to form an acquaintanceship with so saintly a man. The memory of his holy life, of his powerful pleadings at the family altar, and of his ready sympathy when it was greatly needed, can never be effaced. He was indeed a prince in Israel."

While in the New Mills Circuit, Mr. Sellars sustained

a most painful bereavement. His son William, the youngest by his first wife, in the midst of much promise, was suddenly smitten down by consumption. The sad story is thus told by his brother,¹ who was with him in his last moments, and is so full of chastened feeling that it cannot fail to arrest attention.

“For some time previous to his death, William was preparing himself for the work of the ministry, being a student in the Lancashire Independent College, Whalley Range, Manchester. He was but twenty years of age, in person tall and muscular; and, as a youth of great devotion and promise, was much esteemed by his tutors and fellow-students.

“With such indomitable energy did he enter upon the pursuit of knowledge, that, for two years previous to his college term, in addition to the time occupied in the duties of his calling, by which he earned a subsistence, he spent six or eight hours daily in the study of Latin and Greek. But he worked beyond his strength, and in the month of June 1871 he returned to his father’s house to die. The progress of his disease was very rapid,—only seventeen days elapsing from the discovery of its symptoms to its fatal termination.

“It was a lovely Sabbath morning, in the month of July, when the father entered the chamber of his dying son; and, although the latter appeared no worse, but rather better than on previous days, he said, ‘You are going to heaven to-day, my lad!’ ‘Yes,’ he repeated, ‘my lad is going to heaven to-day!’ Then sitting beside him, he opened his Bible, and from the Book of Revelation, read of a ‘new heaven and a new earth,’

¹ Mr. J Sellars.

where 'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things are passed away.'¹ Then he sang the hymn commencing,—

There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign ;
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain,—

and concluded with a fervent supplication to the God of his life to take the hand of his departing child, and conduct him through the dark valley, whose outer shadows were even now receiving him. Afterwards he went to a morning appointment, but could not be prevailed upon to stay the evening service, as he said he wished to witness his boy's departure for glory.

"Evening came, and we watched the sun setting behind the hills, and thought of him whose sun was about to go 'down while it was yet day.'² Scarcely had we finished witnessing the departure of the one, before we were called to witness the departure of the other ; for, as the last streaks of light were fading from the heavens, he awoke from his uneasy slumberings, and though but an hour before we had lifted him into bed, he arose, threw aside the clothing, and seemed as though he would have left it. 'John,' he said, 'see ! I am wanted. Don't stop me. I must go !' The family were hastily called, and father commenced singing. 'Father !' he exclaimed, 'don't sing ; you are spoiling the music.' And those features, which but a short time before had been distorted by the pangs of suffocating pain,

¹ Rev. xxi. 4.

² Jer. xv. 9.

were lit up with exultant joy, and his full blue eyes sparkled with an unwonted brilliancy. 'Ah!' said father, 'William, you never before thought I spoiled the music; but you have heard the music of heaven, and that has spoiled you for the music of earth.' 'Look!' whispered William, in impatient eagerness; 'can't you see them?'—alluding probably to angels—'There is one,—there are two, three, four hundred: one for me, one for father, one for John.' 'He is wandering,' said an attendant. 'Nay, I am not wandering,' he replied, 'I can see what you see, and I can see what you do not see. See! they are calling me; I must go! You will let me go, father, will you not?' he asked, imploringly turning to him. 'Yes, my lad, I will let you go,' was the reply. And almost as soon as the words had left his lips, with a deep-drawn sigh and a last faint flutter, William breathed his spirit into the hands of his Maker.

"Father, who hitherto had been supporting him, now laid the lifeless head upon the pillow, gently placed the hands by his side, tenderly kissed his lips, and said, 'Let us pray.' And, oh, what a prayer! 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away,' was the opening sentence; 'blessed be the name of the Lord.'¹ Briefly he alluded to God's dealings with him in that place. There, during his first appointment, God had given him two sons; had raised him and his wife from the verge of the grave, and now he had taken William to Himself. Then he reviewed the leading incidents in the life of the departed,—for he loved in prayer to view all the way in which the Lord his God had led him, noting a meeting

¹ Job i. 21.

here, and an apparent desertion there,—here a great trial, and there a great deliverance,—and concluded by thanking God for having honoured him with such a son; and now that He had recalled that gift, he earnestly implored resignation to the Divine will, and the sanctification of the dispensation to the good of all whom it intimately concerned. Whilst his rich voice poured forth the burden of his spirit, in tones now trembling with tenderness, now plaintive with grief, and then ringing with the joyous expression of a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, it seemed as if Jacob's ladder was again let down to earth; as if angels were ascending and descending upon it; and whilst those ascending bore with them the emancipated spirit of the departed, those descending brought comfort, and peace-inspiring confidence to the bereaved. We heard the whispering of their voices, felt the wafture of their wings, and were as conscious of their presence as of our personal existence. It was at once the hour of death and resurrection,—of natural death to William, and of spiritual resurrection to John."

From New Mills, which was the scene of so much sorrow and affliction, Mr. Sellars removed, in August 1872, to Belper, in Derbyshire. There he resided within a stone-throw of the place where he was first married; but five minutes' walk from the Baptist chapel, to which his mother took him when a child; and in the district where he commenced his public ministry. Nothing could be more congenial to his feelings than this appointment. The early and endearing associations of the place led his memory back to halcyon days, and with little less than youthful ardour he lived them over again.

Between himself and his former colleague,¹ in whose welfare, as we have been informed, he took such a generous interest, a correspondence was carried on; and, as that gentleman observes, "If you wish to know a man, read his letters to his familiar friends;" and inasmuch as he has favoured us with some of Mr. Sellars' letters to himself, ranging between the years 1872 and 1874, we are able to furnish a glimpse of him through this medium.

Having been informed of the death of a senior local preacher in New Mills Circuit, he wrote, "That which I feared has come at last. John Smith, my old faithful friend, has soon followed John Beard to the rest which remaineth for the people of God. It is now exactly twenty-five years since God united our kindred spirits, and made us true yoke-fellows in Furness revival, which, for extraordinary incidents and providences, was the most remarkable I ever saw. When the Church was at the lowest point, God put the travail and burden of that revival upon John Smith's heart; and now, many of those who were then brought to Christ shout him welcome to the skies. Soon after that revival, the Circuit had a severe trial in carrying out righteous discipline, and was threatened with an unjust removal of the itinerant preacher in consequence of what had been done. John Smith was the man who was the chief saviour of the Circuit at that crisis. It is to the honour of my old friend that he was firm as well as mild; and that, when occasion required, he could fight as well as pray."

On being informed that the neighbourhood of Driffield,

¹ The Rev. W. Yates.

to which his correspondent had removed, was as flat as a pancake, he replied, "Well, you will be in less danger of being exalted above measure. Be thankful to be led

To the mount above,
Through the low vale of humble love.

Read Wesley's sermons, one every morning, and your profiting will appear unto all."

Suffering much from bodily affliction, he expressed himself thus, "My appointment as yet is with the Lord, and no doubt in due time it will appear whether I am to be employed or laid aside for good. At present I am waiting at the Lord's door with the old prayer,—

Behold the servant of the Lord!
I wait Thy guiding eye to feel.

At this time I am more anxious to know *how* than *where* I shall be. I trust that He, who on several occasions hath reinvigorated my body for active service, will do so again; and if not, that He will send me to a Circuit suited to my infirmity.

His love in time past,
Forbids me to think,
He'll leave me at last
In trouble to sink "

His affliction, however, assumed such a serious character, that it was deemed expedient to relieve him in a measure from Circuit work. Hence the Connexional authorities considerably granted fifteen pounds for that purpose. A gentleman in Bradford, too, through the Rev. J. Adcock, sent him five pounds. In these expres-

sions of sympathy he saw the providential care of God, and with emotions of joy exclaimed, "I can sing,—

I find Him lifting up my head,
He brings salvation near."

Communicating these facts to his late colleague he says, "No light appears for the next Connexional year; but I hope, by the help of my God, to be well again. In this respect my faith faileth not. 'Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.'"¹ But, as the sequence will show, he never fully recovered from this affliction. It was the death-messenger, and eventually it brought his body to the grave.

"As a practical expositor of the Scriptures, and a comforter of the sorrowful," writes an official² in the Belper Circuit, "I never heard Mr. Sellars surpassed. As a preacher, he could, in the most effective way, call to his aid the art of music. The most beautiful hymns were selected, and rendered with an exquisite taste and subduing pathos, till all in his congregation were made to feel, and such as were Christians would mentally, if not audibly, exclaim, 'Lo! God is here, let us adore.'

"He once went to see a female who was dying, and much distressed by a consciousness of unforgiven sin. When he entered the room she exclaimed, 'He'—referring to Christ—'will do it to-day! He will do it to-day!' 'What will He do to-day?' inquired Mr. Sellars. 'He will save me,' she replied. 'And that He will,' said Mr. Sellars, 'if you only believe.' After

¹ Ps. cxii. 4.

² Mr. T. Summerside.

praying with her, he sang, to a tune called 'Rest,' the verse,—

O, remember me for good,
Passing through the mortal vale ;
Show me the atoning blood,
When my strength and spirit fail ;
Give my gasping soul to see,
Jesus crucified for me !

While he was singing, she received Christ, and soon after died triumphantly."

"By kindness," this writer adds, "he was much impressed ; and all who showed him affection were amply repaid."

CHAPTER VIII.

SONG MINISTRY.

HITHERTO we have followed Mr. Sellars through scenes of joy and sorrow ; have been with him "in labours more abundant ;"¹ have found that the gospel preached by him was "the power of God unto salvation ;"² and have read testimonies concerning his worth and usefulness furnished by disinterested and competent witnesses. In order, therefore, that what has been said in relation to him, as a successful labourer in Christ's vineyard, may have cumulative force, it seems necessary that we should, without any pretence to an analysis of his character as a preacher, view him more fully in the light of his ministerial work.

The remark of a bishop to a young man who had applied to him for ordination, "I do not forbid you to preach, but nature does," might have been reversed in the case of Mr. Sellars. To a highly exceptional degree, nature had, apart from mental gifts, furnished him with endowments which gave him no mean place among men. He was comely in person ; above the average in stature ; of noble presence ; with a countenance of much mobility, ever and anon shaded or illumined by the dominant thoughts and feelings of his mind and heart.

¹ 2 Cor. xi. 23.

² Rom. i. 16.

All who looked upon his facial expression might see in it the index of a genial and true man. Many have possessed a more eloquent tongue; but few a more eloquent, and none a more honest, face. How it softened with pity, kindled with love, and beamed with the light of holy joy! It must have been a mental or social gloom very profoundly settled, which the light of his countenance would not dispel. Of him, as of "smiling morn," it might have been appropriately said,—

At whose bright presence darkness flies away.

His voice was of rare flexibility and compass, as charming to the ear as tones of music. "Can Mr. Sellars preach?" was the inquiry made by one who was going to hear him for the first time. "I don't know," was the reply, "but they tell me he can sing." The subject of this conversation coming up at the time, said, "Thank you; I had rather be considered a good singer than a good preacher; the latter profession I expect to lay aside in a few years, but the former I hope to retain for ever." It has frequently been observed, by those who were familiar with his rich and powerful voice, that, as a professional vocalist, he might have earned fame and emolument; but he consecrated this as well as his other gifts to the service of God. Many who were untouched by his sermons, were won by his songs. Possibly his singing was as much blessed, if not more, than his preaching; and certainly it was by some more appreciated. Persons having no sympathy with either Dissent or religion, were often lured into his congregations by the hope that the sermon would be interspersed with solos. The prejudice of an old lady, who could

not tolerate such irregularities, but whose inquisitiveness would not permit her to stay at home, was completely overcome by his rendering of the National Anthem during the delivery of a sermon from the text, "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's ; and unto God the things that are God's."¹ "Well!" she exclaimed, on leaving the chapel, "I could not have believed it ; I never heard 'God save the Queen' sung like that." In this, as in other instances, the song was not given merely with a view to variety, but rather to give force and completion to the sermon ; it was not an accretion, but a legitimate outgrowth of the subject. And had the words and tune been composed specially to illustrate and enforce the subject, they could not have been more suitable and helpful.

Preaching from the text, "Behold the fowls of the air ; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"² he said, "On a winter's night, a local preacher was returning from a distant appointment. The wind was piercing, and the snow falling fast. His clothes, by long service, had become thin and threadbare ; nor would his means allow him honestly to replace them with better. This was a suitable time for the arch-enemy to suggest hard and unkind thoughts of God. Accordingly he reminded him of the miles he had that day walked : the times he had preached ; the coolness, and even ingratitude, with which his self-denying labours had been requited ; that now he was returning home to be confronted by his destitute circumstances ; and that on the following

¹ Matt. xxii. 21.² Matt. vi. 26.

morning he would have to rise early, and go forth to long, hard, and ill-remunerated toil. Then, directing his attention to the lights in a large mansion, he said, 'In that house resides one of my children; he lives in ease and plenty, and has all he desires. Now, if God be the just and gracious Being you preach, and believe Him to be, how is it He allows such inequalities, and permits my servants to fare so much better than His own?' Listening to these suggestions, which flesh and blood, tortured by the elements, seemed to strengthen, we cannot wonder that the outer darkness gave its complexion to the poor man's thoughts; that the outer cold transmitted its chilliness to his heart, and filled him with gloom and despondency. At that wavering moment, however, God rebuked, instructed, and comforted him in a remarkable manner. A poor girl, thinly clad, ran past; her feet were shoeless, and her hair was streaming in the wind; as she went she was singing,—

The birds without barn or storehouse are fed,
From them let us learn to trust for our bread:
His saints, what is fitting, shall ne'er be denied,
So long as 'tis written, the Lord will provide.

When Satan appears to stop up our path,
And fill us with fears, we triumph by faith;
He cannot take from us, though oft he has tried,
This heart-cheering promise, the Lord will provide.

He tells us we're weak, our hope is in vain,
The good that we seek we ne'er shall obtain;
But when such suggestions our spirits have plied,
This answers all questions, the Lord will provide."

The fervour and pathos with which Mr. Sellars rendered these verses in song, imparted to them a force and beauty that no recital could possibly have yielded.

In the abodes of trouble and sickness his melodies were more refreshing than the breath of the morning: they revived the soul, hushed its discordant elements, and filled it with the harmonies of heaven. Calling upon an afflicted Christian who was out of employment, and whose extreme destitution appeared to paralyse all hope and effort, he struck up the hymn commencing,—

Give to the winds thy fears,
Hope, and be undismay'd,

and sang with such a gracious influence, as made distrustful fear give place to joyous confidence.

The following shows the facility with which, on every available occasion, he used his special gift for the good of others and the glory of his Master. "One day," says a friend,¹ "we were crossing the Humber in a storm of thunder and lightning; some musicians on board were playing 'Auld lang syne'; the saloon being full of passengers, Mr. Sellars requested them to play the tune again, and gave out the lines,—

It is the hope, the blissful hope,
Which Jesu's grace hath given,
The hope when days and years are past,
We all shall meet in heaven.

He took the air, and I took the bass, while the band accompanied in sweet strains. The influence was marvellous. Many were moved to tears, and not a few tendered us their thanks. Soon after my return from Australia, I was with Mr. Sellars and a number of friends at the house of the late George Leech Ashworth, Esq., of Rochdale, and being always delighted with his

¹ The Rev. J. Townend.

vocal performance, I requested him to sing the 'Crucifixion.' He began with the verse,—

When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Prince of Glory died,

and coming to the words,

See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down,

he rose from his seat, and placing his hand on his bosom, rendered the passional sentiment expressed in the words with thrilling effect." In this way he was accustomed to turn the conversation of friendly and family gatherings into a religious channel, and often made what might otherwise have been an uninteresting and profitless evening, a season of holy enjoyment.

His manner of address was unstudied and natural; his language figurative and pictorial; therefore, his preaching to a certain class was pleasing and profitable. His illustrations were never above the comprehension of his hearers. He went not to the ends of the earth, or into the bowels of the earth, or above the earth for a parable; but, like the Great Teacher, he took it from something with which his hearers were most familiar. And whilst, in some instances, not an allegory that either orator or literati would be likely to employ; yet it would be one that answered the ends of figurative language, by simplifying the truth and making the "thought shoot forth in living lighted beauty." Wise or unwise, old or young, would see its meaning, and be struck with its homely character. In a Sunday-school address, he said, "The child of God can always get on

his Father's knee, and find something in His pockets, which the hand of faith may take out." In another address, on an Easter Sunday, he asked the question, "Do any of you boys, when your father goes to work in the morning, get out of your own bed to lie in his place?" "Yes," replied one and another. "And why do you do that?" "Because it is warm," they answered. Then he proceeded to say, "The grave to the natural eye is a cold, damp bed; but to the eye of faith it is 'the place where the Lord lay;' He has taken away the damp and chill; and when the Christian lies there, he only lies in his Lord's warm place." Other examples might be furnished; but these are sufficient to show the kind of simile, in the use of which he was most happy and effective.

Erudite Mr. Sellars was not; nor did he ever make pretension thereto. His theological reading was circumscribed; and, in his later life, it was confined almost exclusively to the Bible and Wesley's sermons. Five chapters of the former and one of the latter he read every day; and no ordinary circumstances were allowed to interfere with this arrangement. Such was the extent and accuracy of his Scripture knowledge that parallel passages on any fact, doctrine, or precept he could collate and quote without the aid of a concordance, and without even referring to the chapter and verse. Strongly opposed to receiving truth second-hand, he relied on no man's opinions till he had tried them by the Divine standard. The word of God he interpreted and preached upon no human authority merely, but according to what he understood to be the analogy of faith. Concerning all new theories he would say, "To the law and to the

testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”¹

This habit of receiving truth was adopted, not simply with a view to a sound and efficient furnishing of his mind as a minister, but from a conviction that without it he could not be completely developed and fortified as a Christian. “How can we repel the attacks of the devil,” he was wont to ask, though not in these words, “if our arrows are only feathered with human opinions; or stand in the great moral and spiritual conflict of life, if our spiritual nature receive its aliment from nothing better than magazine articles, fugitive literature, and sensational religious stories? Souls fed on such pabulum will never possess the stalwart Christian manliness which characterised our forefathers — will never stand in the evil day. We shall have to read our newspapers, and the writings of this and the other author less, and our Bibles more, before Methodism and the pulpit can regain their former power in the land. Apollyon is not vanquished by such weapons as, ‘Thus saith the wise,’ or ‘Thus saith public opinion;’ but by *the word*, whose vital force is in the affirmation, ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ ‘Thus it is written.’ He whose shield is faith, and whose quiver is filled with arrows from the Word of God, is alone invulnerable and invincible in the day of battle.”

Holding these views, and boldly affirming them,—and his conduct being uniformly consistent with his views,—whilst his ignorance on many matters was evident, he was nevertheless well qualified for the work to which he had devoted his life.

¹ Isa. viii. 20.

In social converse, if the topic related to commerce, politics, or science, he had little to say; but if it referred to things spiritual and eternal, his head, heart, and tongue were at once engaged. Having a scriptural, sharply defined, and settled creed, he was "ready always to give an answer to every man that asked a reason of the hope that was in him with meekness and fear."¹ The whole Bible being within the range of his memory, he often quoted passages from it, the novelty and aptness of which surprised those who heard them. A striking illustration of this occurred in an official meeting, where he was urged to offer an apology to a gentleman whom, in an unguarded moment, he had offended by his imprudence. Regarding himself as being more harshly dealt with than the circumstances of the case merited, he opened his Bible and read, "All that watch for iniquity are cut off: that make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought."² Most of the members of the meeting were impressed with the passage, and with the ready way in which he turned to it.

Never had a lover of classic literature a more thorough acquaintance with the choice sayings and paragraphs of his favourite author than had Mr. Sellars with the sublime sentences and passages of the Bible. Like the Bereans, who "were more noble than those in Thessalonica," he "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily."³ An opponent might make his opinion appear the more logical, but certainly not the more scriptural.

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 15.² Isa. xxix. 20, 21.³ Acts xvii. 11.

CHAPTER IX.

POLEMICS.

WHILE Mr. Sellars, by assiduous attention to religious culture, studied to show himself "approved unto God, a workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth,"¹ he also, as we have seen and heard, by his musical talent, invested the services of the sanctuary with more than ordinary interest. His gift of song was in a high degree attractive and useful. By some, no doubt, a solo in a sermon would be considered an outrage upon pulpit propriety. To such persons Mr. Sellars was not sent. His work lay beyond the circle in which they moved, and was a ministry which no rule-of-thumb system could have accomplished. Regardless of the squeamish notions of a few, of the hard and fast line of routine laid down by others, he pursued his own course, and prosecuted his labours in a way that commended itself best to his judgment. So long as his ministerial duties were not neglected, he did not see that the most punctilious as to routine had any right to complain. He knew well how to adapt his abilities to the character of his employment, and his success may, in no small measure, be traced to that knowledge. Using his talents for the glory of God and

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 15.

the good of men, he was not unduly influenced by either the favourable or adverse opinions of friends or foes. He laboured as one who was amenable to a heavenly rather than to an earthly tribunal. What Peter said to the lame man at the gate of the temple, he might have said concerning the consecration of his gifts to God, "Such as I have give I thee."¹

When forced into polemics he wielded the sword of the Spirit with great valour. And although his mental powers were not such as led to distinguished achievement in the arena of debate, yet an opponent often writhed under the sallies of his sense and wit.

During his location in Cornwall, by request he attended a meeting of Plymouth Brethren; and knowing that several members of his Church had become innoculated with the doctrines of that sect, he determined to watch closely their proceedings. The Brethren, after their manner, formed in class, and in turn read the Scriptures. Each member professed to be directed by the Holy Spirit in the selection of his reading; but it was soon evident that the selections were prompted by sectarian prejudice, rather than by the Spirit's influence.

The tenth chapter of John's Gospel being selected, on coming to the twenty-eighth verse, a brother observed that, while some would rob them of the consolation therein contained, they had in it the Saviour's assurance that He gave unto them "eternal life," and they should "never perish," neither should "any man pluck them out" of His hand.

Mr. Sellars remarked that the passage might be understood by referring to Peter's teaching on the subject,

¹ Acts iii. 6.

which he designated a double-barrelled gun, levelled at the heresy of those who maintain the impossibility of a believer falling from grace ; and who allege that, where such apparent apostasy occurs, it is proof the individual has never been truly converted. For the apostle, in the following passage, declares final salvation to be conditional—"If ye do these things, ye shall never fall."¹ And further, that the fallen person, of whom he speaks in the preceding verse, was once saved from sin is clear from the fact that it is impossible to forget that which was never known. And that he did forget is obvious, for the apostle adds, "And hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."²

One of the Brethren replied, "A greater authority than Peter hath said, 'My sheep shall never perish.'"

"And," added Mr. Sellars, "the same authority has said in the preceding verse, 'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.' From which we may infer that, ceasing to hear His voice and follow Him, they cease to be His sheep,—they become goats, and with them must have their portion."

"But how can a sheep become a goat?" inquired a brother.

"I will answer that question," Mr. Sellars replied, "when you tell me how a man becomes a sheep. The metaphor sheep is employed to describe a certain character, and ceasing to be that character, there is no warrant for a personal appropriation of the promises given to it."

Another brother thought some light was thrown on the subject by Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, and

¹ 2 Pet. i. 10.

² 2 Pet. i. 9.

he read with solemn and assuring emphasis, "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."¹ "Now," concluded the reader, "if it be not in the power of any creature, either in this world or in any other, to separate us from the love of God, our union surely must be indissoluble."

Mr. Sellars, whilst admitting the premises, failed to see the force of the conclusion, and said, "The passage says nothing about the impossibility of a believer separating himself 'from the love of God ;' whilst elsewhere in the same Epistle, after stating that faith constitutes the link of union, the apostle teaches that by unbelief it may be broken. 'Because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear ; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee.'² Again, what does Peter mean in his First Epistle, when he teaches that the heirs to the incorruptible inheritance are those 'who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation' ?³ Does he not mean that as the power of God only keeps through the instrumentality of faith, if faith be wanting, Omnipotence engages to keep no longer ? Wherefore, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, we are said to be Christ's house, "if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."⁴ And in the following chapter we are warned by the

¹ Rom. viii. 38, 39.

³ 1 Pet. i. 5.

² Rom. xi. 20, 21.

⁴ Heb. iii. 6.

doom of God's ancient people, who perished in the wilderness ; and by that terrible visitation the exhortation, ' Let us hold fast our profession,'¹ is enforced. To the angel of the Church at Philadelphia it was written, ' Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.'² Assuredly the apostle had not the vain confidence of some when he declared, ' But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.'"³

"Oh!" interpolated a brother, " Paul simply meant a castaway from the apostolic office."

"Then," continued Mr. Sellars, "you think it possible that one who is morally unfit for the apostolic office, may nevertheless be fit for heaven." And without waiting for a reply, which, indeed, did not appear to be forthcoming, he proceeded, "Nor should we conclude that this letter to Timothy was intended as an anodyne to any fears of falling which that young disciple might have experienced. 'Holding faith, and a good conscience, which some, having put away concerning faith, have made shipwreck: of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander.'⁴ But had Hymeneus and Alexander held the faith of some, they might, even after their apostasy, have said, as I heard an intoxicated person say the other day, 'If I were to die now I should go to heaven, for I know I was once right.' What is this but turning the grace of God into lasciviousness? To check such false and damning confidence, many warning examples are given in God's Word, and many admonitory exhorta-

¹ Heb. iv. 14.

² Rev. iii. 11.

³ 1 Cor. ix. 27.

⁴ 1 Tim. i. 19, 20.

tions to watchfulness, prayerfulness, steadfastness, and self-denial are recorded."

In this way, for upwards of twenty minutes, he assailed the "Once in grace, always in grace" tenet of the Plymouth Brethren. He had been virtually challenged to discussion, and, those who invited him to the meeting were professedly seeking after truth, therefore, according to his views of truth, did he endeavour to enlighten them. The effect was such, that the cavillers, if not convinced, were so thoroughly vanquished, as not to invite him to further discussion.

This incident is a fair specimen of the trenchant way in which he could wield the weapon of the Word in polemical discourse.

In his ordinary ministrations, Mr. Sellars succeeded, as few speakers can do, in gaining and retaining the attention of his hearers. He never preached without being deeply impressed with the thought that, as in the days of Job, when the "sons of God present themselves before the Lord, Satan comes also among them;"¹ to the end that he may divert attention and cause distraction; or, as described in the parable of the sower, that he may "take away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved."² "Men," he would sometimes say, "remain godless because they remain heedless: not so much by inducing a spirit of unbelief, as of indifference, does the wicked one frustrate the work of God." Thus, not being ignorant of Satan's devices, he endeavoured to frustrate them by counter devices.

At a Sunday-school Anniversary, observing many of the children were asleep, and that those who were awake

¹ Tob i. 6.

² Luke viii. 12.

were restless and listless, when it came to his turn to address the meeting, he held up a threepenny piece, and said, "The first boy found asleep whilst I am speaking, shall have this coin!" When, lo! it transpired that what the drowsy ones had gratuitously done while others were speaking, they would not, even for a reward, do while he was addressing them; nay, every child, to the utmost of his ability, fixed his eyes upon the speaker, lest he should be suspected of the meanness of competing for the prize.

Drowsiness in a congregation he would not tolerate. Soporific influences seldom prevailed under his ministry; for when his lively and racy utterances proved ineffectual to prevent sleep, then it was dispelled by the genius of his songs. For the special behoof of one hearer, whose expression and attitude forbade the supposition that his eyes were closed for the purpose of preventing distraction, he sang six times during the delivery of a sermon. The habit of this brother was so chronic, that he eventually left the chapel; because, as he said, "Mr. Sellars would not allow him to sleep."

Equally intolerant was Mr. Sellars of all sights and sounds that were likely to interrupt worship. On a certain Sabbath morning, by the ringing of a fire-bell, his congregation was startled to a degree that rendered attention to the sermon impossible. Seeing this, he requested the people to keep their seats, whilst a messenger was sent to ascertain the cause of alarm. In a few minutes the congregation was informed of the particulars, and the service proceeded without further interruption. Because many persons have little control over their senses, and are captivated or annoyed by the

adornments of a place of worship, he strongly deprecated the introduction of any style of architecture in chapel building, other than that which is calculated to make the structure substantial and comfortable. He encouraged mothers to bring their young children to God's house ; but recommended them to occupy seats near the door, so that in case the children were restless, they might be removed without occasioning disturbance. And when a removal was necessary, he advised that the children should by no means be taken home ; for if they were, as children are apt scholars, they would be sure to cry again if homeward inclined ; but that they should, after quiet had been obtained either by soothing or correction, he again brought into the chapel, and so taught obedience.

Perversions in religious ordinances he was quick to detect, and faithful to reprove ; especially the perversions of singers, who were eager to attract attention to themselves and their performances. The chapel, he insisted, was neither a music hall nor a concert room ; and when choirs aimed at something more than efficiently conducting the praises of the congregation, he contended that they mistook their vocation, and were a hindrance rather than a help to worship. Many times was he at issue with choirs upon this subject, and, by the honest expression of his views, gave them no little umbrage.

A precentor, who was often introducing new, fanciful, and original tunes, in which the congregation could not, and were not intended to join, gave him great annoyance. One Sunday morning, the first verse of the opening hymn having been rendered according to a new and inappropriate tune composed by the choirmaster,

instead of giving out the second verse, Mr. Sellars said, "Go on!"—his feelings being too perturbed to read aloud the remaining verses in a befitting style. At the conclusion of the service he was met, at the foot of the pulpit stairs, by the leader of the choir, who, in a very excited manner, claimed to know why in such a curt and unceremonious way he had been ordered to sing the hymn through?—adding, that the professional services of himself and coadjutors were gratuitous, and that if more respect were not shown them, they would go where they would be better appreciated. In reply, Mr. Sellars said, "Had you been singing with grace in your heart, and sense instead of vanity in your head, you would never have started such an unsuitable tune, and thereby exposing yourself to a just rebuke. If you and your colleagues will sing heartily unto the Lord, and not unto the praise and glory of yourselves, it will be better for all of us ; but if you will not, neither God nor His Church desire your services." The following Sunday the orchestra was empty, and Mr. Sellars had the privilege of selecting and starting the tunes. The affair ended in a great improvement in the conducting of this important part of religious worship in that congregation.

To alter, or add to, the original composition of an old tune, he regarded as an unwarrantable licence. What Mr. Wesley said of would-be hymn menders, he said to the leaders of choirs concerning tunes. "I desire you will not attempt to mend them ; for you really are not able." Observing on one occasion, after announcing a six-lines-eights metre, that the organist played the first two lines of a long metre tune, on giving out the hymn

second time, he announced the metre with great emphasis. The long measure tune, however, was sung, and adapted to a six-lines-eights hymn. When the choir had sung the first verse, he said, "I have known that tune for thirty years, and never knew it to be anything else but a long metre. These so-called improvements I have heard of before; and now that I have fairly caught you at them, you shall have my mind on the subject. Such a compound of silk and sackcloth, marble and mud, as that tune with its modern additions, I never heard. It seems to me, that some singers in regard to tunes, are like certain workmen in regard to boots,—they cannot make a new article themselves, but must be everlastingly cobbling other people's work." It happened that the leader of the choir, whose ingenuity had made the long metre tune serve a six-lines-eights metre hymn, did mending in both departments, though his censor knew it not. After this criticism, he ceased to cobble tunes, and exercised his talent wholly upon hoes, to the great benefit of both customers and singers—the latter especially.

Scarcely less tender were Mr. Sellars' dealings with incapable and indolent choirs. Giving out a beautiful and appropriate hymn, on an important occasion, the leading singer, by a shake of the head, intimated that the choir could not sing it. "What!" he involuntarily exclaimed, "Can't sing it?—why, you render Wesley's hymns—the best collection in the world—of none effect. The best part of them you cannot sing, not having tunes to their metres, and the other part you murder with your hackneyed old drones."

CHAPTER X.

AN AMBITION.

THE characteristic features of Mr. Sellars, as just delineated, prove that his views were not crude and dreamy ; but that they were carefully digested, earnestly advocated, and, when need arose, fearlessly defended. He never hesitated to do what he believed was right, though by doing it he might subject himself to odium and ill-will. He never thought of putting expediency in competition with truth. The one question with him was, Is it *right*? And when that question was settled affirmatively, everything in relation to it was settled. He needed no second consideration to induce him to do it ; nay, he regarded every second consideration irrelevant. Doubt as to results never seemed to enter his mind. He lived above harassment of that sort, without misgivings cheerfully did what he believed to be his duty, and patiently waited for the end.

As an ambassador of Christ, his allegiance to his sovereign Lord was uniform and uncompromising. Nothing short of a thousand sinners, brought by his instrumentality to love and obey his Saviour, a thousand gems in his own immortal crown, would satisfy his ambition. Such was his exalted aim. And success short of this was to be considered a failure. So pronounced

were his views on a soul-saving ministry, that, whatever a minister's title, position, and attainments might be, if the word preached by him was not blessed in "converting the sinner from the error of his way,"¹ it was, in his judgment, as great a misnomer to call him a minister of the gospel of Christ, as it would be to call a man a fisherman who catches no fish. "Why don't you get some books, study them, and endeavour to make yourself a preacher?" was the presumptuous inquiry made by a gentleman at an Annual Assembly. This gentleman at the time was reporting a decrease in his Circuit, whilst Mr. Sellars was reporting a large increase in his. Referring to this fact, he answered, "If I can preach to better purpose without books and study than you can with, am I not a wiser man than you?" Yes, while he was not wise to win office and emolument in the Church militant, he was wise to win a place among those who have "turned many to righteousness,"—who "shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever."²

In no hireling or perfunctory manner did he discharge the duties of his calling. We never knew him, when in health, seek either rest or recreation. In relaxation his soul knew no repose. Preaching with him was ever, and at once, a duty and a delight. The principle propounded by John Stuart Mill, "That happiness is attained, not by seeking it as an object, but by constant devotion to some high purpose," he verified to the fullest degree. And if Carlyle's definition of a hero, namely, "That he is one who brings heaven's truth to bear upon earth's wrongs," be sound, then he was a hero of no ordinary type. Pain,

¹ Jas. v. 20.

² Dan. xii. 3.

weariness, and privation were borne with the greatest fortitude, that he might fulfil his ministry. Often, after conducting three services on a Sunday, and walking many miles in wet and wintry weather, he has been heard to say, "Now I am happy, for I enjoy John Guttridge's luxury,—the luxury of being well tired on a Sunday night."

The joy and strength of Mr. Sellars in labour, were in no small measure attributable to his persuasion that the ministry of the word was ordained by God to enlighten, convince, and convert men. The inadequacy of human agency in itself to accomplish such results, only tended to strengthen his confidence in the Divine power which accompanied it, and made it "mighty to the pulling down of strongholds."¹ Knowing his sufficiency was of God, he would say, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."²

The character of his preaching was strictly evangelical. His aim was to exhibit the work and teaching of Christ, who is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God."³ But he did not fall into the common error of supposing that Christ is only preached when He is set forth in His *priestly* character; the fact was made prominent that He who came as a Priest to save, came also as a Prophet to teach, and as a King to rule. It was an obtuseness to be pitied, and a perverseness to be scorned, which could not see the preaching of Christ in an enforcement of the morality and charity of the gospel, as a necessary fruit and evidence of salvation. He preached no mutilated gospel. "He doled not out in soothing accents, the

¹ 2 Cor. x. 4.

² 2 Cor. xii. 9.

³ 1 Cor. i. 24.

promises of God intended only for believers, to respectable and sleepy sinners;" but he told his hearers plainly that if not saved from the love, power, and pollution of sin in this world, there was no hope of salvation from its consequences in the world to come; that the faith which saves also sanctifies, and makes meet for heaven; and that if it do not the latter work, there is no reason to conclude it has done the former.

The following extract shows with what justness he might have claimed to be in the apostolic succession. "‘We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.’¹ We have neither time nor heart for ambition and selfishness. We preach not our own words, but the Word of the Lord. What power is there in our own words to awaken the sleeping conscience, and to raise the dead in sin? If by the voice of our ministry the unbeliever is convinced, the rebellious subdued, and the darkened and enslaved by sin brought into the light and liberty of the sons of God, we know whose Word we have spoken. We are but vehicles of heavenly sounds; the lips are human, but the voice is God’s. His treasure we carry in our earthen vessels; His light we reflect on a darkened world; and the bread which comes down from heaven we distribute to the famishing multitudes of earth."

Concerning Mr. Sellars’ manner of preaching, we notice three particulars in which he was pre-eminently apostolic. First, as to diction. His "preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom."² He spoke to the people in their own language, and could with marvellous ease adapt himself to the capacity of his hearers. He was

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 5.

² 1 Cor. ii. 4

often designated, "A diamond in the rough." It is, however, questionable whether polishing would have much improved him. In rubbing off, or toning down his angularities, he might have lost directness and force. Again and again his colleagues tried to alter his style of address to country congregations. A very dignified brother, when going with him to a missionary meeting, suggested that it would be much better if preachers, instead of coming down to the people's level, would aim at bringing the people up to their level. This gentleman at the subsequent meeting, composed principally of uneducated hearers, in attempting to raise them to the proper standard said, "Christianity is the grand panacea for all the moral and spiritual maladies of humanity." Mr. Sellars who followed, and who, before certain audiences, would not have hesitated to employ similar language himself, commenced his address thus:—"Now all you that know the meaning of the word panacea, lift up your hands." Not a single hand was raised. "Now all you that know the meaning of the word cure-all, lift up your hands." Every hand was raised. Then turning to his learned brother, he quoted, "In the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." "Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret."¹ "That," he added by way of comment, "is how we must raise the taught to the elevation of the teacher."

His zeal was apostolic. He had deep compassion for sinners, and strong yearnings for their salvation.

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 19, 13.

Indifference in any lawful undertaking he viewed with disapprobation ; but in the pulpit he regarded it as awfully criminal. It was the watchman sleeping while the city was in danger. Few ministers have entered more fully than he into the deep significance of the psalmist's words, "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up."¹ Wesley's sublime avowal was often on his lips,—

The love of Christ doth me constrain
To seek the wandering souls of men ;
With cries, entreaties, tears to save,
To snatch them from the gaping grave.

But his preaching was mainly distinguished for its honesty. His object was, not to please, but to profit : "And though to please is sometimes to profit, yet he oftener pleased by profiting, than profited by pleasing." The gospel trumpet in his hand uttered no uncertain sound. An intelligent hearer once observed, "I have heard many more learned and eloquent preachers than Mr. Sellars, but never a more honest one." "This," said he of whom it was spoken, "is the greatest compliment I ever received, and the greatest compliment a preacher can receive. Learning, eloquence, and popularity may have their notice and reward in this world ; but faithfulness will have it in the next, when the encomium will not be, 'Well done, good and popular, eloquent and learned,' but 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'"²

"You will have some difficulty in pleasing these people," was a remark made to him concerning a Circuit in which he had just gone to travel. "Yes," he replied, "and I shall deserve to have difficulty if I

¹ Ps. lxi. 9.

² Matt. xxv. 23.

attempt it ; but I don't mean to attempt it. I have God to please, and I can please Him by such a manifestation of His truth as shall commend my ministry to every man's conscience in His sight." "You have not the favour of such a one," it was stated. "Perhaps not," he answered, "but I have something better than his favour, I have his conscience, and so he will find when the abating of his anger will allow him to listen to its voice."

No vice did he more intensely hate than covetousness ; and woe to that individual in whom it was so dominant as to incur his rebuke, for his language in condemnation of it was most withering. To a wealthy farmer, who occupied a seat in God's house for which he paid nothing ; who was known to ride miles round the country to evade a three-halfpenny toll-bar ; and who was so imprudent as to invite Mr. Sellars to partake of his hospitality, he said, 'I question whether you can afford the luxury, for I am sure a man who cannot pay for a seat in God's house cannot afford to entertain a preacher.' At a Sunday-school Anniversary, the sermons of which he preached, the two collections, from at least two hundred persons at each service, principally well-to-do farmers, amounted to the unprecedented sum of one pound sixteen shillings ; on this being announced before the service was concluded, there arose a tall, portly majestic gentleman, the richest man in the parish, who addressed the congregation thus : "I call that first-rate ; and I will give sixpence, if seven other gentlemen will each give the same sum, to make it two pounds." On hearing this, the preacher, addressing one of the gentleman's workmen whose wages averaged about

twelve shillings per week, said, "John, you will never stand that." Whereupon John replied, "Aw nare loik to be bet wit' maister i' givin, so aw'l be sicpunce to mak it into two pund."

Concluding a farewell sermon to a very niggardly congregation, he remarked, "I don't know who my successor will be, but I know that he ought to be either an angel or an ass. The former, after having done his work, might return to heaven till the following Sunday; and the latter might go and graze on the common till again wanted; but should he possess human necessities, with your present disposition, it will be an unfortunate thing for you, and a worse thing for him."

He did not, however, under the pretence of sparing no man's sin, make personal attacks from the pulpit. He assailed character, not persons. Every sermon was a mirror, clear and bright, before each man's conscience; but no sermon was a libel. The ministry of reconciliation in his hands never degenerated into a weapon of personal abuse.

While his pulpit themes were various, there were some subjects on which he specially delighted to dwell. It was not so much by the penal consequences of sin, as by the love, compassion, and long-suffering of Jesus, whom our sins crucify afresh, that he endeavoured to pierce the hardened heart, and bring about that "godly sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of."¹ In reproving sin, it was evident that his own heart was agonised; that he cared more for the cause of his Master, and the welfare of his hearers, than for himself. Sharpened with love, his words pierced

¹ 2 Cor. vii. 10.

deeply. In the most subdued and melting tones were the threatenings and denunciations of the gospel delivered, whilst in his countenance was seen a kind upbraiding look akin to that which broke unfaithful Peter's heart.

What Dr. Stevens has written of some of the pioneers of Methodism in America, may, with no less propriety, be applied to Mr. Sellars. Like them, he was not "great as a scholar, or masterly as a divine; he had not much to say of moral beauty, necessary relations, arguments *à priori* and *à posteriori*, volitions, intellectual processes, and active powers, but he could talk of sin so as to make the flesh creep, and the hair stand on end; and of the love of the Saviour and the freedom of His grace, so as to make the heart rejoice, and the tears come to the eyes. Certainly he merited not the censure pronounced on a metaphysical divine, of whom his people during the week saw nothing, namely, 'That on six days of the week he was invisible, and on the seventh he was incomprehensible.'"

CHAPTER XI.

PERENNIAL CHEERFULNESS.

AS we have proceeded with our narrative, enough has been said to lead the reader to infer that Mr. Sellars was a singularly happy man. In him were a number of qualities which, under the benign influence of religion, combined to make him so. Possessing a perennial flow of animal spirits, a strong vein of humour, a lively wit, a glow of benevolence, and a love of story and of song, he was the charm of any company in which he might be placed. Cold and haughty he could not be. He lived among men as among friends, and gave society too much credit for possessing his own honesty, transparency, and friendliness of character; therefore he frequently became a victim to the artfulness of others. His truest friends have at times wished that in him had been associated a little more closely the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove.

The young, the aged, the poor, the sick, the infirm, found his society specially congenial; for each and all of these he had strong affinities. With childhood's gambols he could scarcely have had a more hearty sympathy. He would play on a tin whistle for an hour to please a child; and he would sing as long to

revive and cheer the troubled. His happiness was found in "the number of persons and things he loved and blessed, and the number of persons and things that loved and blessed him in return." Dogs and other domestic animals shared in his kindly greetings; and not a little amusing and instructive was it to see how they remembered and reciprocated his attentions.

He "rejoiced with them that rejoiced, and wept with them that wept." These were nature's promptings. Whilst the softening eye and plastic feature eloquently spoke his strong human sympathies, these were not their only expression; it seemed as though the sight of need touched some sympathetic nerve, and prompted the muscle by which his hand was involuntarily thrust into his pocket, and the last shilling abstracted to relieve it. During the Lancashire cotton famine, when his family was large and his salary small, he undertook the responsibility of supporting one of the sufferers. And under still more trying circumstances, a good commercial opening for one of his sons was declined in favour of a widow's child, because he deemed the poor woman's necessities more urgent than his own.

On the death of his father, he became the proprietor of a small farm in Derbyshire. But regarding the annuity left for the maintenance of a relative insufficient, he let it at a small rental, with the understanding that the tenant should supplement this relative's income with certain privileges. The privileges were in part allowed; but the land was run upon, and the premises so neglected, as ultimately to be worth no more than the mortgage upon them, therefore the farm was sold. After meeting all claims there was a balance in Mr.

Sellars' favour of ten pounds, which was the first money he had received from the property. His management of this business failed to earn for him the thanks of his posterity. The family Bible, much thumbed and marked about the first chapter of the First Epistle of Peter, is the only relic the family possesses of that old homestead. In that chapter he said, "He had a deed of settlement to an inheritance which never could be mortgaged, which no man could take from him; that would never depreciate in value; and that was incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away."¹

As may readily be surmised, he became an easy prey to imposture. On a wet winter's day, a shivering, half-clad beggar excited his commiseration to such a degree as to induce him to part with his second-best trousers. And great was his surprise when, on the following day, he was told that, in a second-hand clothes mart, he might, for the sum of seven shillings and sixpence, purchase the said garment. How solemnly did he adjure that the imposition should not be told to Mrs. Sellars. For she, knowing his generous infirmities, submitted his exchequer and wardrobe to such periodical inspection as would, in her opinion, effectually preclude the possibility of imprudent benefactions.

An amusing case of imposition, of which he was the victim, occurred whilst he was at Bacup. A female came to his door having cloth to sell; and he, believing it would be a charity, bought of her. On taking it to a tailor, he discovered it was not of the quality represented,—in fact, it was but *shoddy*, and was worth only a third of the money he had given for it. The succeeding day,

¹ 1 Pet. i. 4.

this woman called at a house in which were two of Mr. Sellars' sons; they, recognising her, prevailed upon the lady of the house to detain her. In the meantime one went for a policeman, and the other for his father. The sequel was, that whilst the woman was exhibiting her merchandise, and expatiating on its quality and value, she was suddenly confronted by emissaries of both law and gospel: the gospel, however, triumphed, for after Mr. Sellars had, with becoming severity, admonished the offender, and received from her restitution and promises of amendment, he allowed her to go on her way.

Few men were more completely emancipated from worldly ambition and the tyranny of covetousness than he was. Office seeking was no part of his vocation. During the whole period of his itinerancy, we are not aware that he ever allowed himself to be sent as a representative to the Annual Assembly.¹ For the secular part of a minister's calling he had neither aptitude nor liking. Receiving the blessing of an old and infirm stone-breaker, whose heart he had gladdened by the way whilst singing "There is rest for the weary," he said, "I would not exchange that blessing for a vote to the president's chair."

Never did he stipulate with a Circuit for a salary, nor with a Church for a fee. To the executive, who spoke to him on the question of salary, he invariably answered, "I am willing to take what you are able and willing to give." In one Circuit, which was twenty-eight miles in extent, he often walked twenty miles on a Saturday to his Sunday appointments; and would receive nothing out of the horse-hire fund, because it was inadequate to

¹ He occasionally attended, but not as a representative.

meet the claims made upon it. In another Circuit he walked five thousand miles, and preached seven hundred times, in two years. Meanwhile, his clothes, originally black, became russet, and his boots were so much worn that it was needful to wrap his feet in flannel to protect them from cold and wet. One of those years his stipend, in the aggregate, was seventy-eight pounds. This fact, viewed in connection with his large family, sufficiently explains why he was brought to such extremity.

Because of the fewness of his wants, he readily accommodated himself to temporal straits. "Of earthly good," he would sometimes remark, "we may not get all we desire; but let us save ourselves from disappointment by expecting little; and if we cannot get all we like, let us like the more what we do get." This advice, coming from him, was thoroughly experimental. The wealthy he envied not. So long as he had life's necessities, he regarded himself as enjoying all the comforts of the rich, whilst freed from their cares and responsibilities. To a gentleman in the West of England who, from an eminence, was showing him his estate, he said, "In which way are you better circumstanced than myself? Do I not live as well as you? Do I not sleep as well as you? And do I not enjoy as good health as you?" "For anything I know to the contrary, you do," replied the landowner. "Then," said Mr. Sellars, "the only difference betwixt us appears to be that you have these comforts with balancing cares in this one spot, whilst I have the same comforts without the cares, England over." Perhaps this representation of the case was somewhat hyperbolical; but he thought it was real, and, therefore, was as happy as if it were so.

In the daily benefits he received, he saw Heaven's *souvenirs*, and felt a gratitude which gave an enhanced enjoyment of the gifts of Providence. Past mercies were to him pledges of mercies to come, which his heavenly Father could not deny; "signet rings for faith to wear in lifting up holy hands to God." Every cloud had a silver lining; every bitter cup its ingredient of comfort; every medicine its healing mercy; and so exclusively did he fix his thoughts and faith on the gracious purposes for which trials are sent, that soon the cloud became all silver, the cup all comfort, and the medicine all mercy. No matter how poor the Circuit or house in which he might be located, in certain respects it was the best he ever had, and of all other respects he was wisely oblivious.

With rare exceptions, his life was a notable immunity from care, which he classed under two heads—lawful and unlawful. The latter, as being alike inconsistent with religion and right judgment, he discarded; the former, with cheerful confidence, he took to that Friend who invites us to cast our care upon Him. Having done so, he would sometimes say, "I have left it all there," and then calmly and resignedly wait the issue. Certainly he needed not the rebuke administered by Martin Luther to Philip Melancthon, when the latter expressed his dissatisfaction with the gloomy prospects of the Reformation—"Tell Philip Melancthon to give over trying to govern the world."

The disposition of all the possibilities of life he left with God. He remembered anxiety would not keep off trouble; neither would it enable him to bear it when it came. Should the threatened evil come to pass, not as

a result of personal folly or neglect, but in the course of Divine appointment or permission, then it was a portion of those trials which in Christian fortitude he must bear, and under which God had promised to sustain him. Besides, by anticipating, the evil would be doubled. It might never come; and if it did, events might be precisely the same as if he had never given himself an uneasy thought about them. To be anxious, fretful, and chafing, as though Omniscience might overlook him, eternal love forget him, or the wheels of Divine Providence cease to work in wise and beneficent action, was, in his estimation, as wicked in the sight of God as it was torturing to himself. Attention to the duties of to-day was his chief concern; believing that alone could render life's retrospect satisfactory, and its end peaceful.

Allusion being made to his large family, and his increasing responsibilities, he quaintly replied,—

“Look at the hen in farmer's yard,
To live alone she finds it hard;
Yet I have seen that self-same hen,
That scratch'd for one, could scratch for ten;”

adding, “Did you ever know an instance of an earthly parent feeding his fowls and leaving his children to starve? And if not, how can you suppose our heavenly Father will do so? ‘Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?’¹

I'm sure that Heaven will prove our friend,
And bread as well as children send.”

¹ Matt. vi. 26.

It being suggested that a new set of teeth would improve his powers of articulation and mastication, he humorously answered that he had too much masticating power out of his head—pointing to his boys—to increase that power within it.

“Have you insured your life? Are you a member of the superannuation fund? Is any provision made for you in old age?” To each and all of these interrogatories he replied emphatically, “No!” “Then how is that?” “Because,” said he, “God has never put it in my power to do anything for the future; it taxes my utmost resources to live honestly. And as to the superannuation fund, I have no desire to enter it, since there is a clause which, in the event of my decease, excludes my wife and family from its benefits.”¹ “Then what do you intend to do?” “Do! I shall do as I have been doing all my life—trust in the living God; if He die before me, I am ruined. As long as He lives He is bound by His word to provide for me; and since He does not appear to be doing it in the ordinary way, well, He must do it in the extraordinary.”

For many years he had a firm persuasion that he should never be superannuated; that his work would only close with life. He thought with aversion of continuing on earth when unfitted for active service. Often in singing he adopted the words and sentiment of Charles Wesley,—

¹ “Should the wife of any member be more than fifteen years younger than her husband, no Disparity Fee shall be required, nor shall she be entitled to any Annuity from this Fund after the death of her husband.” Rule 19. See Rules and Regulations of the Superannuation and Beneficent Fund for Ministers of the United Methodist Free Churches,

O that without a lingering groan,
I may the welcome word receive ;
My body with my charge lay down,
And cease at once to work and live.

he sequel shows how fully and remarkably his desire
as granted.

CHAPTER XII.

HIS PHILOSOPHY.

THE key to much contained in the preceding chapter is to be found in this. While Mr. Sellars' life was, for the most part, one of joy and freedom from worrying care, it was also one of devout recognition of God. He sought counsel of the Most High in all things; convinced that if he found the right path, and continued therein, it would not be by an unerring instinct, but by an unerring Guide. His rule of life was, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."¹ And before coming to an opinion or decision on any important subject, he would say, "I must pray about it." This done, he would wait for an answer, either in the form of a strong unwavering conviction, or some obvious indication of Providence. Nothing was too great or too small to carry to a throne of grace. The cut finger of a child he would mention in prayer; and that, not in some general or inferential way, but by particular designation and description. And in justification of this procedure, which some persons considered beneath the dignity of prayer, he contended, "That whatever, in the most trifling degree, painfully affected the child, could not be

¹ Prov. iii. 6.

a matter of indifference to its Divine Father, nor beneath His dignity to notice, or His love to alleviate."

In the matter of appointment to a Circuit he sought Divine direction clear and emphatic. With some ministers the great desideratum is numerous calls to Circuits; but he saw things in another light. And when a colleague, much elated, told him what a number of invitations he had received, he said, "Then it would have been much better had you received but one, as Providence calls no man two ways at the same time." How true! Many may be the voices which solicit, but out of the many only one is the voice of God.

Alas! often, like Lot, the eyes and hearts of even ministers of religion are too intently fixed on the fat land to hear that voice, unless it bid them, as they not unfrequently persuade themselves it does, take possession of it. What more natural than that a minister, when he sees an opportunity of improving his social position by a change, should interpret it into a call of Providence? But should the contemplated change perchance tend another way, then what about Providence? How little is heard on the subject! And yet, why should not Providence call in that direction as well as in the other? It is to be feared, the mythical, or it may be the substantive Methodist preacher, of whom Mr. Sellars used to speak, is a fair representative of not a few; who, having an impediment in his speech, and being urged to serve a Circuit financially inferior to the one in which he was labouring, by the argument that Providence called him to do so, said, "If Providenth callth me from a fat thurkit to a lean thurkit, Providenth may call till ith throat's thoar, I think I shall th-stick; yeth, I shall

th-stick." If some of the magnates in the many sections of the Christian Church, who pride themselves in their business sagacity, would come down from their lofty pedestals, and go to some poor Churches or Circuits which specially need such capacity to help them out of their difficulties, would not their conduct furnish a far more conclusive proof of their belief in the call of Providence, than does their clamour to gain patronage and position? Such conduct would do much to silence the rampant scepticism of many, who, as things move at present, are slow of heart to believe.

From inconsistency of this sort, Mr. Sellars was free. When he had invitations, he invariably fixed upon that which was most likely to introduce him to a sphere of the greatest usefulness; and even when he had none he would rejoice, saying, "I shall simply have to go where I am sent; I am thus saved from the danger of making a wrong choice, and shall have more time to pray about it." He uniformly prayed that he might either have one invitation or none. At an Annual Assembly, being without an invitation, a petition, prompted by painful experience, was felt to be exceedingly appropriate. "Lord," he exclaimed, "save me from a Circuit where rich men have nothing to do but to get into mischief." An impression sometimes came upon him as to his next year's appointment; and, occasionally, it was so forcible that he publicly named the Circuit to which he was to go. Nor was this owing to any reciprocated partiality, but often for reasons quite the opposite. Of a Church, by which he believed he had been contemned, he observed, "God will never send it a revival only by my instrumentality." And it was so. Concerning some of

the officials of a certain Circuit, who had never heard him preach, but were, owing to reports, prejudiced against him, he remarked, "They are worse than pagans; for the Romans had such a sense of justice as to condemn no man unheard."¹ At a public meeting, in a country place belonging to that Circuit, some of those officials being present, when the chairman, alluding to his popularity among the rustics, introduced him as the king, he replied, "Yes, but there are many sorts of kings; there is the king of the cobblers, and in no place have I had such a reputation for cobbling as in the town of —, although I never preached a sermon, or gave an address there in my life. But I intend going round Jericho seven times,—referring to the outlying places, the anniversary services of which he had engaged to conduct,—the walls of prejudice are beginning to totter, and soon they must fall." When by a majority of votes, not often outnumbered by a preacher entering that Circuit, he was enabled to enter the citadel, he said, "I would have come sooner, but Satan hindered me."

A very cordial invitation to remain in a Circuit a third year was declined, because he believed it was the will of God he should go to another Circuit. "But have you received a call to that Circuit? Have you been either spoken or written to on the subject?" To these inquiries he answered, "No; but I am persuaded my Master has work for me to do there, and I shall receive an invitation." The invitation came; he went to the Circuit, and laboured in it with great success.

In several instances he spoke openly and confidently of going to places where there was avowed hostility

¹ Acts xxv. 16.

against him, and in all such cases his expectations proved to be well grounded. This prescience was not owing to his deeper insight into the ways of men than others possessed ; but to his better acquaintance with the laws by which He worketh who holdeth in His hands the hearts of men. He studied the ways and principles of the Divine government through their operations. Nothing was more repugnant to his faith and feelings than the theory that the world is a mere machine, wound up and set a-going. The words *fortune*, *chance*, and *luck* he could not tolerate. "What are these," he would exclaim, "but the devil's nicknames for God's providence." He held, that with God there was nothing accidental ; but from the beginning everything was certainly foreknown, decreed, or permitted. Whilst fully believing in man's accountability, its consistency with Divine foreknowledge he never tried to explain. But though he did not perplex himself with this vexed question, and could not comprehend the orderings of him whose "way is in the sea, whose path is in the great waters, and whose footsteps are not known ;"¹ yet often secrets that were hidden from the wise and prudent, God revealed unto him. The present, temporally considered, he regarded as being, not a system of optimism, but a school of discipline ; a field of moral conflict ; a furnace of spiritual refining ; a sphere for gaining a victory over our lower nature and developing the higher for another life. He saw that temptations, perplexities, afflictions, bereavements, obscurity, poverty, and the whole train of human evils, were but fiery trials which purified. Therefore, knowing something of the

¹ Ps. lxxvii. 19.

apostle's experience, he was wont to adopt his language, and say, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere, and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."¹

The principle in the Divine government which Mr. Sellars specially recognised, when assured that his mission would be to a place where he thought himself depreciated, is lucidly set forth in the following extract from one of his sermons:—"The uniform aim of the devil and his children in all ages has been to rob God of His glory. It was by aspiring to be as God, Lucifer lost his first estate. And when by his instigation our first parents yielded to a similar desire, not only did they fail to become as God, but they forfeited the true dignity of man. This cardinal sin has been found among the children of disobedience in all lands and at all times. In our day it is displayed in the infidel habit of attributing the work of God's hands to second causes. In whatever field such persons behold His handiwork, whether in creation, providence, or grace, they, as far as possible, exclude God, and little else is seen but the laws and properties of matter. The utmost height their adoration reaches is indicated by such expressions as these—How stupendous are the laws which govern the universe! How wonderful are the works of nature! If, as a nation, we are politically, socially, and morally in advance of our neighbours, it is owing to our litera-

¹ Phil. iv. 11-13.

ture, arts, and sciences; to our political sagacity, inventive faculty, scientific ingenuity, and mercantile enterprise; or to the discipline, pluck, and prowess of our army and navy. If the gospel word be quick and powerful to convince and convert in the ascriptions of praise rendered, even by the Church, the preacher frequently shares too largely with his Master. In a great measure these effects are attributed to qualifications which are but secondary, such as learning, eloquence, and zeal. Therefore the Almighty, who is jealous of His glory, often uses instrumentalities confessedly feeble, and obviously of themselves insufficient, that man, perceiving the proximate cause to be inadequate to the effect, may rise to the higher and ultimate Cause, so that His own arm may be seen, and His power acknowledged. In olden times, by the lifting of a rod, the Red Sea was divided; by the smiting of a rock water gushed out; by the sound of rams' horns the walls of Jericho came down; and by the sling and stone of a stripling Goliath was slain. In later times, by the preaching of unlearned fishermen, rocky hearts were smitten, the strongholds of sin were destroyed, and Satan's head was bruised. In modern revivals, God, who excludes human boasting, does not allow ecclesiastical dignity, learning, or eloquence to take a very conspicuous part. 'But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence.'"¹

¹ 1 Cor. i. 27-29.

From this principle of the Divine procedure, and the apostle's statement based upon it, Mr. Sellars concluded that if, in any place, on account of his eccentricities, want of polish, or other defect real or imaginary, he was despised, that would be the place where God would be most likely to send him, and bless his labours; for by so doing, He would secure to Himself the glory. And events usually justified his conclusion. On the other hand, he feared lest his popularity should interfere with his usefulness, and the day come when he should be without a despiser. "With one exception," said the chairman of a Circuit meeting, "the brethren have spoken well of you, and have voted in favour of your remaining in the Circuit another year." "Then," said he, "I would like to know who makes the exception; not to gratify curiosity, or to make him an object of ungenerous feeling, but that I may thank him for saving me from a great woe. 'Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you.'"¹

Periods of trial and abasement he regarded as favourable spiritual omens. He had noticed the sort of discipline through which men had passed on whom God bestowed great honour. "'Before honour is humility.'² Joseph must be sold into captivity, foully aspersed, and cast into prison; Moses must be exiled in Midian; David must be outlawed, and chased as a partridge upon the mountains; the three Hebrew children; Daniel, Paul, Peter, Luther, Wesley, and all whom God called to a special work, were by special trials prepared for that work."

When his trials were most mysterious and perplexing;

¹ Luke vi. 26.

² Prov. xv. 33.

when spiritual help seemed to be withdrawn, and the enemy was allowed to buffet him ; when the heavens were as brass, and his most fervent prayers were followed by no immediate answer ; when the hated obstructions to his perfect intercourse with things above were allowed to continue, and the brightness of his heavenly Father's countenance was obscured by intervening clouds ; when his best plans and purposes to do good were thwarted, and the good he desired came not, while the deprecated evil came ; when his holiest hopes and aspirations in relation to his family remained unfulfilled, and their misconduct pierced him with sorrow and shame ; when all these things tried and threatened to overwhelm him, he was comforted by the reflection that he knew as little what was good for his spiritual as for his temporal lot, and that God, who knew all things, was the guide of his life.

Whilst his religion was strongly emotional—and few experienced more peace and joy through believing than he did—his faith rested not upon feeling. There were moments when he was conscious of a tendency to attach too much importance to religious comforts, assurances, and foretastes of joys to come ; but this tendency was checked by the consideration that God would not allow His gifts to be trusted more than Himself. Therefore, when severest trials came, wherein God appeared to hold him at a distance, to forsake him, yea, fight against him as against an enemy, he knew he was the object of Divine love, and was not depressed beyond measure ; then he forgot not the words, “ Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light ?

let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon His God.”¹

Here was the source of his confidence and joy. And those most intimately acquainted with him believe that his faith seldom faltered. Except in a solitary instance, to which reference has been made,² we never knew his countenance dejected with sorrow or overcast with gloom for half an hour together.

Nature had done much for him, but grace had done more. He was often upon the mount of spiritual communion, therefore his face shone as with the lingering beams of the Eternal. Strong in faith, he “beheld as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and was changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”³ Hence he cheerfully trod life’s rough road, and sung,—

For while Thou, my Lord, art nigh,
My soul disdains to fear;
Sin and Satan I defy,
Still impotently near:
Earth and hell their wars may wage;
Calm I mark their vain design,
Smile to see them idly rage
Against a child of Thine.

¹ Isa. l. 10.

² After the death of his wife.

³ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

CHAPTER XIII.

STERLING INDEPENDENCE.

ENOUGH has been said to show the complexion religion gave to Mr. Sellars' experience; we, therefore, proceed by stating that as a man he had a high sense of honour, and was entirely free from absurd conceits, pretences, and false feelings of delicacy and pride. Few persons have possessed more manly views of what some call the menial duties of life than he did. The principle, that what it was right for others to do, it was not wrong, when circumstances required it, for him to do, regulated his conduct. The idea that the doing of a right thing could render him less respectable, never appeared to enter his mind. He often looked with feelings of apprehension and regret upon the sentimental notions which led the sons and daughters of certain families of his acquaintance, by no means wealthy, to regard it as a demeaning thing to soil their hands, or to be seen at any kind of household or out-door work. In his estimation, such sons were fit for nothing but to squander the money their parents by care and industry had made; as for the daughters, he pitied the poor fellows who had the misfortune to make them wives.

He never considered that the maintenance of his

cial dignity required his hands to be kept unspotted in the dust of homely service. "Mr. Sellars," said a son on finding him employed getting in a load of ls, "Are you not ashamed?" He replied, "I am ashamed of nothing but sin." He rose one morning, before the rest of his family, to clean the boots of a young minister who was staying with him, in order, as he alleged, that the young gentleman might not be ashamed to clean his own. Often have his friends been either amused or shocked at the sight of him going toward the railway station, burdened with weighty and inelegant luggage.

Very different, however, were his views in relation to anything morally mean; the slightest identification with a base and unprincipled conduct, he had the greatest disgust. On no consideration would he countenance a son whose moral integrity he questioned; whatever his social status or possessions might be, with him he could have no intimacy. Neither gift nor patronage would he receive, when he saw the intention was to be base. The man whose conduct he was persuaded had no favour in the eyes of God, found no favour in his.

Discovering that an influential member had threatened a poor but worthy woman, that if she did not pay her rent within a given time, he would exact his due with the utmost rigour of the law, Mr. Sellars faithfully admonished him, and resolved he would no more converse with him unless he withdrew the unchristian attitude. From this gentleman he had received much kindness and hospitality; and the carrying out of his

resolution involved a change of luxurious fare and good accommodation, for the food and shelter of a poor man's cottage, every time he went to that part of the Circuit.

For the sake of personal interest and convenience he spared no man's sensibilities ; nor did he, by winking at the wrong, share in the woes denounced against those who oppress the poor, the widow, and the fatherless. He contended that the claims of friendship, to say nothing of ministerial fidelity, required honest dealing in such cases. David's language was his—"I am a companion of all them that fear Thee, and of them that keep Thy precepts."¹

Akin to his abhorrence of moral defilement was his aversion to anything degrading to true manhood, and inconsistent with a spirit of sterling independence. It was beyond the power of any Circuit either to secure his services or to retain them by a bare majority of votes ; not even a second year would he remain if he thought he was only tolerated. The notion that a preacher's success can be gauged by the number of years he has been in a Circuit was not his. He measured by the ratio which time bore to results. According to his mode of reckoning, that workman was the best who did the most work in the least time. For a minister to be retained in a Circuit from grateful or complimentary considerations was, in his opinion, a great mistake. "When a minister has done his work," he would say, "he ought to go ; when a Circuit has done with me, or wants a change, I am ready to go." If he thought a meeting had not acted wisely in asking

¹ Ps. cxix. 63.

him to continue in a Circuit, he would say so ; and if he thought it had done the right thing, he would be equally candid. "Do you think they will invite us to remain?"—inquired an anxious colleague, who was with him in a vestry, waiting the verdict of a meeting. "I cannot say," was the reply, "but they will be very foolish if they don't." The event proving they were not so foolish as they might have been, he congratulated the meeting on the sound judgment and good sense it had displayed.

When, at a quarterly meeting, the steward's account showed a balance against the Circuit, the conclusions he usually came to were, either that his ministry had not commended itself to the people, or that the people had become covetous. He considered that the heartiness with which he ministered to the spiritual necessities of the Churches should be reciprocated by them in contributing to his temporal necessities. In the quarterly meeting of a most influential and wealthy Circuit, on hearing that the income would not meet the expenditure, he proposed that, as in no previous Circuit he had received more than the minimum salary, the deficiency should be deducted from his stipend. Of course, the proposal was not entertained ; but had there been a difficulty in raising the balance, he would have abided by his suggestion.

No more than was reasonably requisite to enable him to live and support his family did he desire. So long as he could keep clear of debt he was content. Money-saving was not his ambition ; had his income been double what it was, his benefactions, most likely, would have been raised in the same proportion. Often,

with a sort of boast, he would say, "I was never worth ten pounds in my life when my debts were paid." Nor was he accustomed, in times of emergency, to apply for relief from the Beneficent Fund. Until his last sickness, we are not aware that during the whole thirty-nine years of his itinerancy he ever received more than five pounds out of that fund.

His repugnance to all that was hollow and insincere, was most marked; and in rebuking it he was scathingly severe. A colleague, on one occasion, having prefaced his speech with an apology, in which he stated he was unprepared, Mr. Sellars, in his address which followed, said, "I should like to know what brother W. means by telling us he is unprepared. He consented to speak at this meeting more than a month ago; and his name has been announced on the bills, one of which was sent to him. I am not aware that besides his ordinary ministerial duties, he has had anything else to do but to prepare. He must, therefore, have been either very lazy, or very conceited, or not very complimentary to you. But if he has addressed you to-night impromptu, I would recommend him never to prepare again, as I never heard him do so well. I have, however, a suspicion, in which others may share, that brother W.'s speech is not altogether unpremeditated. Then, you say, what did he mean by his apology? I'll tell you what he meant; this is his meaning:—'Now, if I can give such a speech as this without preparation, judge ye what I could have done had I prepared like these gentlemen.'" The rebuke was of service; the young man was never again heard to make the like excuse.

A class leader, who, following the bent of habit, had given a dolorous experience, seasoned with censorious reference to the character of members in general, and preachers in particular, he admonished thus,—“Brother U., I remember when a boy saying to my playfellows, ‘Open your mouth, and shut your eyes, and see what God will send you.’ Now, I advise you to learn that art. Shut your eyes to the faults of others, open your mouth a little more frequently in prayer, and then see what God will send you. He hath said, ‘Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.’¹ And I am sure He will fill it with a better story than the one you have told to-day.”

Sometimes he unconsciously occasioned a smile when his intention was to intensify devotional feeling. The time and patience of a leaders’ meeting, over which he presided, having been severely taxed by the crotchets of a member whose name was Bullock, in his concluding prayer, with the most pious reverence, he prayed for the *bullock* which was unaccustomed to the yoke.² The pun was too much for some of the members to bear quietly, and they, to his astonishment and annoyance, laughed aloud. This brought upon them a sharp reproof. And it was not till an explanation was given, that he was aware of the pun. On another occasion, being desired to ask a blessing on a supper provided for a missionary deputation, after surveying the table, he solemnly raised his hands, and in subdued tones implored, “May all who partake of the bounties provided be preserved from doing themselves harm.” The request was pertinent, for the temptation was great.

¹ Ps. lxxxi. 10.

² Jer. xxxi. 18.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOME LIFE.

So far we have had very partial and fitful glimpses of Mr. Sellars' home life. Correspondents, in the most unequivocal language, have alluded to it; but their allusions have only been incidental. The public life of a man is not always in harmony with his private life. At home the man is really seen; and if he have a better name abroad than at home, then abroad he is a hypocrite. The man is what he is in his own family; and if piety be not shown there, he has no real piety to show. That which society sees, which is so affable and attractive, is not the man, but a disguise put on, as an overcoat may be, to go out of doors. And because such disguises are much in vogue, the saying goes, "No man is a hero in the eyes of his valet."

The integrity of Mr. Sellars, tried by this test, remains unimpaired. All the members of his household felt in some degree the inspiration of his sanctified life, and the witchery of his pure and genial spirit. He did not display undoubted excellences overborne by gross and manifold defects. Nobody said of him,—he is a good man, but he is so haughty, overbearing, unyielding, inconsiderate, and morose, that one is tempted to forget

his excellences. His aspect, spirit, and deportment never conveyed to his family the impression that religion was a gloomy or an oppressive thing, or in any way opposed to rational enjoyment. Hence, his children were not driven into the streets, or into baneful companionships, for that needful recreation on which his presence was felt to be a restraint. Childhood's laughter, and youthful sports, experienced no check by his entry. Life to him had no sweeter music than the voice of children; and romping with his boys was his favourite relaxation. By them he was no less esteemed as a playmate than as a father. The sound of his approaching footfall, and well-known voice, was a signal to the whole troop, who gleefully charged him at every point, and vigorously held on by every limb, till oftentimes paterfamilias and tribe were a confused, laughing, shouting, palpitating heap, rolling upon the floor. We love to remember such merry greetings, alas! never again to return.

In managing his family, Mr. Sellars laid it down as a rule, from which there was no departure, that differences of opinion between himself and Mrs. Sellars, in matters relating to their children, should be known only to themselves. Consequently one did not countermand the order given by the other, and thereby lessen the other's authority; nor did one comfort and caress a child when the other had corrected him, and thus strengthen a possible conviction in the sufferer's mind that an injustice had been done.

For his word his children had a strong respect, because he had a strong respect for it himself. So sure was he to perform what he had promised, that, having dismissed

a delinquent for the night, with the assurance that in the morning he would flog him, he was awoke some time after midnight by a tremulously sorrowful voice supplicating at his bedroom door, "Father, flog me now, for I cannot sleep." But his respect for the word of his children was not quite so strong as theirs was for his. In their case, so deep was the taint of original depravity, that upon them lay the onus of proving their words true before they could be accepted. This error led to its own correction. His youngest son, who was never known to tell a falsehood, had his word unfairly doubted by his father, when he respectfully submitted, that he ought to be treated with confidence till he had proved himself unworthy of it. The remark was salutary. It was seen, that to secure truth speaking among children, they must be so credited with it as to feel that to tell a falsehood would be a breach of confidence. "It will not do to tell Dr. Arnold a lie," said one of his scholars, "for he will be sure to believe us."

The obligations of filial relationship, when Mr. Sellars was at home, were rigidly enforced; especially that of dutifulness. We say, when at home, for ministers' wives, owing to the frequent absence of their husbands, have almost entirely the management of the family; on them mainly depend the character and destiny of their children. We sometimes hear the remark, and not without reason, that many preachers' families turn out badly; but it is not, as often seen and remembered, that this in part may be the result of that itinerating system, which requires the head of the family to be away when his presence is most needed at home, and which, when he removes to another Circuit, robs some poor child of the restraints,

comforts, and hallowing influences of those who know and love him.

It often happened that Mr. Sellars was not seen by his family from one week's end to another. But when he was at home, he uniformly inculcated lessons of obedience. Here, he contended, religion or irreligion began. "For," as he was accustomed to remark, "what is religion, but a thorough subordination of the will to God?—and what is irreligion, but rebellion against God? Whatever, therefore, tends to promote obedience in the lower filial relationship, tends to promote it in the higher; whilst, whatever encourages disobedience to an earthly parent, not only conduces to a breach of the Divine law, which requires that 'Children should obey their parents in the Lord,'¹ but strengthens a spirit of rebellion, which, in the end, 'will bow to neither God nor man.'" "Strangle the viper in the birth," was Mr. Sellars' motto. Incipient opposition to the known will of the parent, he quickly perceived, and promptly restrained, at first by remonstrance, but, if that proved insufficient, by punishment. That modern refinement, which spares the rod and spoils the child, never had his approval. Insisting upon submission betimes, obedience became a habit; and for this reason he gained an ascendancy over his sons, possessed by neither mother, tutor, nor any other person. Seldom did he correct: the first indication of mutiny met with such emphatic recognition, that its wholesome memory precluded the necessity of repetition.

The honour due to a father he strictly maintained; but, like all persons of his mould, he could not see that his children ever grew to be other than children. To

¹ Eph. vi. 1.

him the disparity between his judgment and theirs could never be less ; hence, it was highly presumptuous for a son, twenty-five or thirty years of age, to express, on any subject, opinions different from his own. He was so much older, and, therefore, ought to know so much better. It is not easy for human nature, even in its best form, to make those its equals, who, for a long period, have been naturally inferior and dependent.

Mr. Sellars' views of human depravity had a tendency to lessen the pleasure he would otherwise have experienced on witnessing the physical and mental development of his offspring. In their anger he saw incipient murder ; in their selfishness, indications of a covetousness which in the end might rob both God and man ; and even in the moderate gratification of their fleshly appetites, a feeding of those lusts which war against the spirit, and which, if unrestrained, enslave and destroy both body and soul. To appease the anger of a child, by gratifying its spirit of revenge ; to feed the vanity of a child, by attiring it in gay clothing, and teaching it to be proud of its looks ; to encourage cunning selfishness in a child, by applauding its sagacious trickery in its attempts to outwit and defraud a brother or a playmate,—he considered highly reprehensible. Rather should children be taught that true courage and nobility consist in bearing and forgiving injuries ; for in so doing they become followers of Him, “who, when He was reviled, reviled not again,”¹ and who prayed, “Father, forgive them :”² that good looks and clothing are no merit of their own, but are proofs of the goodness of God, in whose eyes men are most lovely when they possess “the ornament of a

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 23.

² Luke xxiii. 34.

meek and quiet spirit ;”¹ and that, in taking advantage of a brother’s weakness or infirmity, they break the golden rule, and thus incur God’s displeasure. These were the lessons he inculcated ; and if, in after years, his children failed to act up to them, it was not because they were ignorant of his doctrine and manner of life.

The personal inconvenience experienced through lack of early educational advantages, impressed him with the importance of giving his children a sound commercial education. Noticing in some of them a defect, most fatal to advancement, namely, an indisposition to value knowledge, and a consequent inappreciation of their privileges, he employed various expedients by way of remedy. One was taken to an office as a candidate for a clerkship, and failing to pass the preliminary examination, was rejected by the principal, who recommended that the boy should be sent to a coal-pit, as he thought him specially fitted for that sort of work. This gentleman was a friend of Mr. Sellars’, and knew the object of the application. The experiment was successful ; for the terrors of the coal-pit were a stimulus, which soon put the rejected candidate for the clerkship at the head of the school. Three months’ experience of back-aching and long hours on a tailor’s bench cured another of chronic laziness, and gave to him, on returning to school, the required momentum.

The work of tutors being sometimes very superficial, he tested educational progress, not by examining exercise books sent out as samples, but by examining the boys themselves. One of his children, having addressed to him his first letter, bore it home with great glee. This

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 4.

letter was the result of the thirteenth attempt to ink over what had been previously composed and traced in pencil by the master. Suspecting such a process, instead of receiving it with the anticipated signs of pleasure and surprise, he simply said to the exultant writer, "Read it to me," which, being unable to do, he was admonished never to bring another letter of that kind till he could. Another child, who, under the moral suasion of an amiable young lady, had failed to learn his alphabet in six months, was transferred to the academy of a choleric old gentlemen, who, by the suasion of the strap, induced him to learn the whole twenty-six letters in less than six days.

Whilst manifesting a thorough devotion to the interests of his children, and prepared to make any sacrifice for their advancement; whilst evincing the liveliest joy in their success, and the keenest anguish in their misfortune, he nevertheless encouraged them to look for the greatest help in themselves. Not until failure had attended their own earnest striving would he come to their aid. If out of employment, only whilst diligently seeking it were they allowed to remain at home; the drones must be driven out, for "if any would not work, neither should he eat."¹

In selecting a trade or a profession for a son, Mr. Sellars had regard, not only to natural fitness and prospects of worldly success, but to the moral fitness of the youth to withstand its temptations, and to the facilities the calling afforded for spiritual improvement. The work of the ministry being considered the most honourable and important in which a mortal could engage—"For God had but one Son, and He made Him

¹ 2 Thess. iii. 10.

a preacher"—he frequently prayed that his sons might all be Levites. Much as it would have rejoiced him had his prayer been answered, yet Eli's sin was regarded with such abhorrence, that he frequently said, "I would rather see all my six lads breaking stones on a highway, than any one of them become a minister for a piece of bread. In all other callings it may be lawful to seek gain; but to do so in this is a sacrilege sufficient to incur a retribution akin to that which came upon Hophni and Phinehas." He trained no son for the Church till satisfied that God had given him requisite qualifications. But in whatever sphere of business members of his family might engage, they were urged never to allow the claims of earth to interfere with the claims of heaven; never to allow the thought to insinuate itself that the demands of godliness are incompatible with life's truest interests; or that to be diligent in business necessarily produces feebleness of spirit in serving the Lord. If, in the bewildering whirl of business excitement, their opportunities for meditation, prayer, and Bible-reading were few, he reminded them that religion consists, not so much in adding special acts of worship to the ordinary work of life, as in permeating the routine of life's common duties with its spirit: that this is done, when contentedly, cheerfully, diligently, and conscientiously an endeavour is made to serve our fellow-men, "To do our duty in that state of life into which it has pleased God to call us." To be godly we must do the will of God,—whose will is, that we be "Not slothful in business,"¹—and he who gives heed to this precept in a becoming way is religious.

¹ Rom. xii. 11.

But it is not to be inferred that he deemed overt and special acts of religion of secondary consideration ; their importance in qualifying for a right discharge of life's duties, he duly estimated. On the first leaf of a Bible presented by Mr. Sellars to one of his sons, we read the following inscription : " ' Search the Scriptures.' ¹ The eyes of God follow you from your bed to see whose book you will pick up first—His or a mortal's." Believing that the word treasured in the heart was the best barrier against evil, and that a passage committed to memory in the morning, might keep the world and the devil out all day, he aimed at attaining to the psalmist's experience when he said, " Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee ;" ² and he also sought to bring his children to the same attainment, by placing every book and paper under a ban till the Bible had been read, and occasionally a portion committed to memory.

The vehemence and point of Mr. Sellars' prayers in the family have made an impression upon the hearts of his children that nothing can destroy. All domestic troubles, cares, wants, and perplexities were told to God. On one occasion he cried, " Lord, save me from the hell of an honest man that cannot pay his debts." His intercessions for his household were specific ; in them he made mention of the besetting sin and infirmity of each member ; and, as the case of each child was brought in succession before the Lord, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest, a solemn influence rested upon the whole family. Those prayers can never perish ; they will either augment the bliss, or deepen

¹ John v. 39.

² Ps. cxix. 11.

the condemnation of those for whom they were offered.

At family worship all were specially interested in the singing of hymns, and the recital of the Lord's Prayer. An illustration of the importance attached to the former was supplied by one of the youngest members of the family, who, on being sent up-stairs to ask the Lord to forgive him some delinquency, was heard shouting, in anything but subdued and penitential tones, "Father! must I sing it?" By singing, it was found that the memory more easily acquired and retained religious truths, than by any other method of training. As a family we all remember something of the hymns of childhood. What precious memories the singing of them awakens! For the moment we are children living over again those days so free from cares, so bright with smiles, and so melodious with the voices of loved ones gone.

But Mr. Sellars was not content with teaching religious truths, conducting religious worship, inculcating religious principles, and illustrating in his character the purity and blessedness of the Christian life; he, at suitable seasons, pressed upon his children the paramount importance and necessity of each one receiving Christ in his heart, resting not till the work of grace was realised in the full renewal of the soul, and the complete transformation of the life. "Godly parentage," he would say, "can avail you nothing, unless you are *born again*, and become the sons of God by the regenerating power of His Holy Spirit. 'Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob,'¹ whilst the children of Abraham,—the children

¹ Matt. viii. 11.

of the kingdom by many precious privileges,—because of their impiety and final impenitence, will be shut out. Your acquaintance with the Scriptures will be worse than heathen ignorance, unless it make you ‘wise unto salvation.’¹ Your much light will be succeeded by dense darkness; the number of your talents will be the number of your stripes; and your knowledge will be the millstone that shall drag you into deeper condemnation. A solemn mockery is your religious service, unless it be ‘in spirit and in truth;’ and a mere outward show is your morality, unless it be the fruit of a sanctified nature.”

He would further add, “As it regards your personal happiness, a formal religion is worse than none at all; it is like that bondage under Pharaoh, which required the Israelites to make bricks without straw, for it imposes upon you the work and denial of the gospel, without giving you its compensating comfort and support; thus by unfitting for the enjoyment of sin, and failing to bring in the joys of holiness, it robs you of both worlds. But though a thorough worldling is undoubtedly happier than a mere formalist, or a half-hearted professor, yet it is not to be supposed he is truly happy; his arms may be full, his senses may be gratified, but his soul, which alone is the man, has no satisfaction. God hath built the house for Himself, and till He enter, the desires can know no content. In His favour and fellowship is the fullest and highest good, and if happiness be sought from this source, it will be found; but if it be sought from any other, that source will be beneath the dignity of your nature and below

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 15.

² John iv. 24.

your capacities for moral enjoyment. Despise God, and His purposes in relation to your being will be contravened ; your life will be a scene of vain pursuits, delusive hopes, ceaseless longings, and manifold disappointments. And at last, though you may have drunk at every cistern of creature pleasure, the verdict will be, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit."¹

On this wise did he speak to his sons, when they accompanied him to his distant appointments, and when he took them aside for the purpose of admonition. His earnest desire and constant labour, on behalf of his family, are expressed in the following verse, which he was wont to sing with emotion never to be forgotten :—

A sinner, saved myself from sin,
I come my family to win,
To preach their sins forgiven ;
Children, and wife, and servants seize,
And through the paths of pleasantness
Conduct them all to heaven.

The influence of such pointed advice, fervent intercession, and holy living was most gracious. Two of his children preceded him to heaven ; and three of those remaining are preaching the gospel and endeavouring to gain the rest he inherits.

Eccles. ii. 17.

CHAPTER XV.

LAST SERMON.

AS we proceeded with the narrative of Mr. Sellars' life, allusions were made to his failing health. The symptoms of the disease—spasmodic asthma—which ultimately brought his body to the grave, were first perceived when he was labouring in Cross Hills Circuit, some four or five years previous to his death. The complaint was greatly aggravated by exposure to the cold winds, which in wintry weather sweep through the Craven Valley, and which he had to encounter in returning from his evening appointments.

During his two years' residence at New Mills, the attacks of asthma were less violent; but in this Circuit he suffered much from a compound fracture of his shoulder bone, occasioned by a fall down-stairs. Mentally, too, he had considerable annoyance, arising from a disturbance at one of the principal places in the Circuit, with regard to the introduction of a new organ, and matters affecting the singing generally. No doubt the two combined did something towards hastening his death. But, notwithstanding these untoward circumstances, considerable good was done at Marple Ridge and Poynton. In one of his letters he speaks of there being one hundred and three members on trial at these places.

His appointment to Belper rather increased than diminished the virulence of his malady ; attacks came with greater frequency, and each was more stubborn than its predecessor. The one prior to that which ended his days was very severe ; it continued eight hours, and caused him to turn almost black. And yet, in the interim of attacks, for a time he laboured as zealously as ever.

When returning home at night from his appointments he was often suddenly seized with paroxysms of intense suffering. On one occasion he firmly believed he would have died, had he not remembered that when he was a boy—more than fifty years before—there was a house, at a little distance along a by-path, which branched out of the main road ; and had it not been for the timely assistance rendered by a good Samaritan who was passing. Suitable remedies were applied, and the crisis was overcome. “The time, manner, and circumstances of the believer’s death,” he used to say, “are ordered of the Lord, and mine was not to be then. I am immortal till my work is done.”

Being, however, unable to discharge with regularity and safety the duties of his office, and having no colleague, the Connexional Committee kindly sent him an assistant. But it was with difficulty he could persuade himself that he was unable to work. In making his last plan, besides giving his substitute full work, he appointed himself almost as before. It was therefore proposed that he should visit his sons at Rochdale, where he would have the agreeable society of old friends, and be beyond the reach of temptation, so far as his Circuit was concerned, to injure himself by excessive labour. “The

afternoon of the day," says a correspondent,¹ "before he left for Rochdale, he spent at my house with a friend of thirty years' acquaintance. By request he sang 'The Lord will provide,' 'In the Christian's home in glory,' and 'A voice from heaven.' We then prayed together, and he went his way never again to return."

The change appeared to be beneficial. His friends heartily welcomed him, and he spent much of his time with them. Each evening he returned to the home of his sons. And after recounting the day's experiences,—which generally consisted of conversations with persons concerning the Lord's dealings, the happy seasons of the past, and the joy he felt whilst singing and praying with them,—he committed the family to the care of the God of the families of all the earth, and retired for the night.

He usually went to bed early, and rose between five and six o'clock in the morning. Having completed his walk, according to arrangement, he would join some family for breakfast and morning prayer. His favourite walk was to Syke, a small hamlet a mile and a half out of town, where resided one of his much-esteemed friends.² In his round of calls, he seems to have been particularly attentive to the aged; to those who, by affliction, had been long unfit for active service, and who on that account were liable to be overlooked and neglected. Sometimes, when inquiries were made about his health, while fully aware of his critical condition, he would exclaim, "Ah! well, I am in God's hands;" and then repeat,—

Manage the wheels by Thy command,
And govern every spring.

¹ Mr. T. Summerside,

² Mr. C. Renshaw,

On his second Sunday at Rochdale, and his last on earth, he preached twice. In the morning at Bagslate, about three miles from the town, and in the evening in the town at Castlemere. The morning text was, "And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it ; for we are well able to overcome it."¹ The sermon was an analogy between the journey of the children of Israel through the wilderness to the land of Canaan, and the Christian's pilgrimage to heaven. The evening discourse, which was his last, was an exposition of the hundred and forty-sixth Psalm, and may be regarded as a fair specimen of his expository style. A verbatim report we cannot furnish, but the following is an outline of his thoughts :—

"This psalm may very fitly be called David's Hallelujah Chorus. All great musical works have a theme—a particular strain which is more or less prominent throughout the whole composition—whilst all other strains, being only so many variations, are made to blend with it.

"Here the great theme is *Praise*. Whenever a piece of music begins and ends on the same note, that is the keynote. In this psalm David begins and ends with 'Praise ye the Lord ;' so that *praise* is really the keynote of the psalm ; all the rest, consisting of incentives and reasons why we should praise the Lord, are only the filling up.

"In the first verse the psalmist says, 'Praise the Lord, () my soul.' This is just as it should be. David calls upon *himself* to praise the Lord.

"And, growing more confident and joyous, in the

¹ Num. xiii. 30.

second verse he exclaims, 'While I live will I praise the Lord : I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.' In a Circuit in which I travelled I met with a striking illustration of praising God while being lasts. A leading singer who, in health, led the choir in one of our places of worship with his voice, accompanied with the violoncello, I visited upon his death-bed. When his end was approaching he called for his instrument, and, being propped up with pillows, played and sang the hymn commencing,—

I'll praise my Maker while I've breath,

and soon after passed away.

"In the third verse David endeavours to make a clear course, in order that his God may have full praise. He knew how ready men were to trust in an arm of flesh rather than in the living God, therefore he speaks of man's impotence. 'Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.' 'Help, my lord, O king,' cried the woman of Samaria to King Jehoram, as he passed along the wall during the siege. The king replied, 'If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barn-floor, or out of the winepress?'¹ Alas! they were both empty.

"But, besides being impotent, man is mortal. Hence, in the fourth verse, we read, 'His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.'

"After having thus shown the impotence and vanity of the things in which men trust, in the fifth verse the psalmist jubilantly adds, 'Happy is he that hath the

¹ 2 Kings vi. 26, 27.

God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God.' Why?

"First, Because of His power. 'Which made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is.'

"Second, Because of His truthfulness. 'Which keepeth truth for ever.' When God appeared unto Moses on Mount Sinai, He proclaimed Himself 'the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.'¹

"Third, Because of His justice. 'Which executeth judgment for the oppressed.' What was the meaning of all that bloodshed in the United States of America during the civil war? Was it not a sermon on the text, 'He executeth judgment for the oppressed'? And later still, God has preached from this text in bringing down the tyrant king of Abyssinia.

"Fourth, Because of His mercy and love. 'Which giveth food to the hungry.' 1. Ordinarily,—by sending the fruits in their season. 2. Extraordinarily,—as when He sent Joseph down into Egypt to prepare for the years of famine. In your own history He has done it, for you all know how He opened the heart of the world to administer to your necessities during the cotton famine.

"Fifth, Because 'the Lord looseth the prisoners.' As when He brought Joseph out of the dungeon of Egypt; Jeremiah out of the dungeon of Jerusalem; and Peter, Paul, and Silas out of prison.

"'The Lord looseth the prisoners.' As in the case of Manasseh, king of Israel, when taken captive by the king of Babylon. 'In affliction, he besought the Lord his

¹ Ex, xxxiv. 6.

God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him ; and He was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord He was God.’¹ In the case of Onesimus, too, we have another example of how God can deliver the soul whilst the body is in bondage.

“ ‘The Lord looseth the prisoners.’ How many has He taken from the scaffold, the block, the stake, to heaven? And how many has He taken, even from the gallows to glory, who would never have got there by any other way?

“ Sixth, Because ‘the Lord openeth the eyes of the blind. 1. Literally. 2. Visionarily, as in the case of Elisha’s servant at Dothan. 3. Spiritually.

“ Seventh, Because ‘the Lord loveth the righteous.’ We see it written in bold letters upon the ark of Noah as it floats over a drowning world.

“ ‘The Lord loveth the righteous.’ We see it written upon Lot’s back as he flees across the plain from the city of Sodom. ‘Haste thee, escape thither ; for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither,’² said his deliverer.

“ Ah ! but is not poor Lazarus, at yonder rich man’s gate, a righteous man? He is. And the rich man one of the devil’s children? Yes. Well, then, it is plain your God’s takes very poor care of His children.

“ Behind my house at Belper I have a large garden. Every morning a little bird perches in a tree ; there it sits for hours chirping, and it always appears to be saying, *wait-a-bit, wait-a-bit*. And oh, how its voice has cheered me when I have been cast down ! David,

¹ 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13.

² Gen. xix, 22.

you remember, was perplexed and troubled at the prosperity of the wicked, but he only had to 'wait-a-bit.' When he went into the sanctuary then saw he their end. You have only to 'wait-a-bit,' and you see the rich man in hell, and Lazarus in Abraham's bosom.

"Eighth, Because 'the Lord preserveth the strangers.' He preserved the Israelites in the land of Egypt, so that, in spite of the tyranny of their oppressors, they multiplied and grew. He also preserved the three Hebrew children when they were cast into the fiery furnace.

"I was once leading a love-feast in a seaport town, when a sailor related how God had preserved him. He told us that, in a terrific storm, a wave broke over the ship, swept the decks, and carried him away. He was sinking, when another wave caught him on its crest, and brought him back upon the deck of the ship. How truly might that man have sung,—

Oft hath the sea confess'd Thy power,
And given me back at Thy command;
It could not, Lord, my life devour,
Safe in the hollow of Thine hand.

"Ninth, Because 'He relieveth the fatherless and widow.' He says, 'Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in Me.'¹ Thus God stands as relieving officer to all widows and orphans. 'I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee,'² said God to Elijah. A widow woman indeed! A very unlikely person to go to for support. Yes, but I, the Almighty, am her husband. 'The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.'³

¹ Jer. xlix. 11.

² 1 Kings xvii. 9.

³ 1 Kings xvii. 14.

And so, whilst there was famine in the palace of the monarch, there was plenty in the house of the widow.

“A good man once stated in my hearing that he and several brothers and sisters were left orphans when very young. On a certain occasion, their circumstances were most straitened; and he, being the eldest, went out to seek work. The whole of the day was spent without obtaining it. As he was returning home, hungry and dejected, he saw three half-crowns lying in the way. He picked them up, and never knew what it was to war again.

“At the close of a service which I conducted in Sheffield, soon after the flood, a little girl was brought to me in the vestry, whose parents had been drowned as they lay in their bed. The cot, in which the child was asleep, floated upon the rushing water, and its life was thus preserved. The person who brought the child to me had adopted it. And so God provided a mother and a home for the orphan babe.

“Many years ago, one of our members, the father of a family of small children, died suddenly, leaving no visible means of support. God, however, raised up a friend. Going to preach in the Circuit some years after, I found the children had all got nicely settled in life; and visiting the widow she said, ‘It has just been as you told me it would be; my second husband (meaning the Lord) has been my best.’

“When I was in this Circuit, my attention was directed to a child playing in the street. I was informed that she was the eldest of three who had recently been bereft of both father and mother, and that they were dependent upon their grandmother, a very poor and aged woman.

I visited the old lady, and obtained her consent to get one of the children into Müller's Orphanage, where I suppose the child now is.

"Yes, God looks well after His own. 'He relieveth the fatherless and widow.' There are a few instances which have come under my own notice, and I could give many others. 'We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen.'¹

"Tenth, Because 'the way of the wicked He turneth upside down.'

"He turned Pharaoh and his army 'upside down.'

"He turned the enemies of Daniel, 'whose bones the lions brake in pieces ere ever they came at the bottom of the den,'² 'upside down.'

"And, as proud Haman's blackened corpse swung in the breeze, there might justly have been written upon that gibbet, which he had prepared for Mordecai, 'The way of the wicked He turneth upside down.'

"And now the psalmist brings us to the climax, by referring to the reign of God. 'The Lord shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations.'

"'Happy, then, is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God.'

"'Praise ye the Lord.'"

With the utterances of this service, the tones of Mr. Sellars' voice, in public, died away; and, as they expired, some of earth's sweetest notes were hushed in eternal silence. Had the future been known to him, the discourse could scarcely have been more appropriate. And, as if to anoint him for his burial, that nothing might be

¹ John iii. 11.

² Dan. vi. 24.

wanting when the time of exit came, at the close of the service he sat at the table of his Lord, and ate and drank in remembrance that Christ died for him.

He returned home wearied ; but with “ a conscience void of offence.”¹ The Sabbath had been one of great spiritual enjoyment, and his soul was as tranquil as was the eventide.

¹ Acts xxiv. 16.

CHAPTER XVI.

LAST DAY.

THE sun, which banishes darkness and brings the glorious light of morning, did so on Tuesday, May 5th, 1873, with a cloudless disc, and with indications which led many to prognosticate a fine day. A kind of lull, that was felt to be oppressive and ominous, pervaded the atmosphere. As the day advanced, its warmth and brilliance more befitted July than May. Mr. Sellars, with thousands of others, hailed it, and breathed the freer when he thought the rigours of winter were past, and the warm, long bright days of summer were approaching. Little did he think it was his last morning on earth: there was no harbinger that led him to suppose such was the case. He appeared to be no worse than usual,—if anything better, and yet it was his last day. He was near his heavenly Father's house; in a few hours the pearly gates would be thrown wide open for him to enter the city of light; but he knew it not. Ere to-morrow's sun announced that another of the world's nights was gone, he would be in the nightless world. His dear ones, Tryphena, William, and multitudes of shining ones, were waiting to welcome him to their society. Above all, he was about to enter the temple not made with hands, to be introduced to the

personal presence of the Lord of the temple, and to His fellowship ; but he knew it not. Yes, he had entered on his last day. Here, reader, for a moment pause. Remember thy last day will come. Hast thou entered upon it?—if so, what about thy future?

On his last day Mr. Sellars rose between five and six o'clock, read his Bible, and bowed in worship before his Father God. He then bade one of his sons, who was about to leave home till the week-end, good-bye ; and proceeded to the house of a gentleman,¹ for whom he had great respect, to take breakfast. After breakfast he read the seventy-first Psalm. A holy inspiration accompanied the Word, so that both reader and hearer wept when they heard the tale of their own experience told, and their prayers so aptly expressed, in the touching language of the psalmist. Witness the scene. Fix your eye upon the two men who are the most prominent figures in it, both of whom are silvered with years ; both bear marks of hard service ; and both are capable of strong emotions. Fill the room with furniture becoming the home of a man by no means poor, but whom the world calls not rich. Place the Bible on the table. See the family gathered, for it is the hour of prayer. And now, as the psalm is read, listen to the intonation of that voice, which gives force to every word and life to every sentence. "In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust : let me never be put to confusion. . . . For Thou art my hope, O Lord God : Thou art my trust from my youth. . . . I am as a wonder unto many ; but Thou art my strong refuge. . . . Cast me not off in the time of old age ; forsake me not when my strength faileth. . . . O

¹ Mr. T. Mitchell, of Castlemere.

God, Thou hast taught me from my youth ; and hitherto have I declared Thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not ; until I have showed Thy strength unto this generation, and Thy power to every one that is to come. . . . Thou, which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side. . . . I will hope continually, and will yet praise Thee more and more." Precious words ! Beautiful scene ! We have met with few words more precious ; with few scenes more beautiful. And certainly none could be more in harmony with the solemnity of the event that was so rapidly drawing nigh. Mr. Sellars, referring to this season of worship later on in the day, said, "I had a blessed time with Thomas in the morning." Truly the Lord forsook him not, but comforted him on every side.

After bidding his old friend adieu, he spent his time chiefly in visiting ; and in the evening renewed the quarterly tickets to a class. When addressing the members he more than once exclaimed, "I feel heaven is gloriously near." Some of the members testify that the hour spent that evening in Christian fellowship was most hallowed ; and that they were indeed in the very suburbs of the city New Jerusalem. He reached Molesworth Street¹ about half-past nine o'clock, had supper, and requested that several pieces should be played on the piano. He was quite cheerful, but very tired ; and complained of a cold sensation down one side ; a feeling he had occasionally experienced since his fall from the

¹ His son's residence.

tree at Nantwich. Having warmed himself at the fire, at eleven o'clock he retired to his chamber.

"On entering his room a little later," says his son,¹ "I found him awake, and so we chatted together. Our conversation had reference mainly to the state of his health. 'I think I shall go home to-morrow, John,' he said, 'as I have now seen almost everybody.' I proposed that he should visit Cornwall during the summer, as the change might possibly prove beneficial. He shook his head and replied, 'I do not think my poor body will ever be made right again in this world.' When I had been in bed about a quarter of an hour he asked me for a light, as he did not feel well, and he feared he was going to have another attack of spasms. As soon as the gas was lit he took his watch, and attempted to time the beating of his pulse; but not succeeding well, he requested me to count the pulsations whilst he held the watch. He then told me to hasten down-stairs, and make up a fire as soon as possible. I went, but before the fire was kindled he followed me, for now the paroxysms were upon him. Between the fits of coughing and expectoration, he gasped—'*Jesus! help me!*' In broken accents he committed his family to God; and then tried to repeat the verse,—

Jesu! Redeemer, Saviour, Lord,
The weary sinner's Friend;
Come to my help, pronounce the word,
And bid my troubles end.

As I knelt supporting him, his eyes closed, and his head fell upon my shoulder. All was over. In the agony of that moment I cried, 'Father! Father! You have not

¹ Mr. J. Sellars.

gone, have you? Oh! speak to me,—speak to me father!’ But there was no answer! there was silence—the deep, unbroken silence of death.” Jesus, indeed, had come to his help, and ended his troubles by delivering him from throes of excruciating agony, and lifting him to a throne.

How mysterious! Only a few moments before he could talk; but now all communication had ceased. Only a few moments before every muscle quivered in sympathy with his physical struggle; but now the chain of sympathy was broken, and the quivering was not. Only a few moments before, in the haste of agony he had, unaided, descended those stairs; but now his remains had to be borne up them, for men said he was dead.

“A strange tragedy it seemed, and all in one short half-hour.” As the morning advanced the news rapidly spread through the town. Many could scarcely credit it; but, alas! it was no idle rumour,—the last day of Samuel Sellars was numbered, and he was gone.

“But, trying as was the scene of that night, the morning brought an ordeal which to me was no less severe. I must now proceed to Belper, there to break the news to his widow and children. It was a beautiful day—one of May’s loveliest, and as the train dashed along through Rowsley, Bakewell, and Matlock, amid scenery perhaps the most varied and beautiful of any to be found along the lines of English railways; it seemed as though smiling Nature mocked my sorrow by her ill-timed levity, so cruel, unsympathetic did she appear, whilst my soul in anguish persistently asked the question—‘If God be omnipotent, how can He be a God of love?’ But, then,

on calm reflection, I remembered that nature had passed through the death of winter, out of the seemingly barren womb of which had sprung this glorious day, to be followed by many others, not less glorious. And so I was led to trust that He, who had thus brought life and beauty from nature's sepulchre, would also raise unto us, from the winter of our sorrow, and the grave of the departed, a summer of joyous hours and ripened fruit; and that we might have reason to exclaim, in language often quoted by our dear father, 'Of all Thy gifts, I bless Thee most for the severe.' "

It was a painful task to convey the sad tidings to the bereaved inmates of that blighted home. And it was rendered all the more painful by the merry prattle of the little ones, who eagerly asked after their father, and who were rejoicing in the anticipation of soon seeing him. But it had to be done; and, therefore, as gently as possible, the sad truth was made known to them that on earth they would see his face no more.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ADDRESS.

"WE therefore commit his body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust ; in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ." On the day of the funeral, many evinced their respect for the departed, by following his remains to the grave. The Rochdale Cemetery, beautiful for situation, where the bodies of three of his children had been laid, was chosen as the burial-place. The service in the chapel was read by the Rev. Anthony Holliday ; one of the few who understood his somewhat complex character. The prayer was offered by his old friend, the Rev. Joseph Townend ; and the following address was delivered at the grave by the Rev. T. W. Townend :—

"Solemn and impressive are the circumstances under which we meet to-day. A dark cloud has suddenly gathered around us. We mourn the loss of one whose genial presence has been to us a source of strength and gladness ; and whose labours, as a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ, have to many yielded unspeakable spiritual benefit.

"Intelligence of his death must have come upon all with startling effect. Last Lord's day he publicly ministered the word of life, and exhorted his hearers

to a grateful celebration of the Divine goodness. During the week, some of us have had happy intercourse with him, and within a few hours of his decease we parted from him, never for a moment entertaining the thought that we should not again hear his voice on earth. So recently as last Tuesday evening, he enlivened the social circle by his cheerful conversation, and repeatedly expressed his pleasure at the prospect of returning home to Belper. Instead, however, of returning to his earthly home, he has been called to his heavenly rest. Though he has gone from us, we can scarcely realise the fact.

“His unexpected removal cannot be without a meaning. Such an occurrence is a serious monitor to us all. He, to whom the issues of death belong, bids us, by this event, remember our nearness to eternity. Most of you have heard fervent and forceful discourses from the lips of our departed friend; and now, when his living ministry is closed, he preaches to us from his grave. Momentous truths are taught us as we stand beside his sepulchre. May God make us all wise to learn the great lessons set before us by this dispensation of His providence.

“Though summoned to a burial of the body of our dear brother, we are not doomed to a burial of our hopes concerning him. The great object of his life was to prepare for his immortal destiny. Religion, with him, was not a dead form, but a living root from which grew much precious fruit. He was no spiritual mummy; his piety had warmth, beauty, and energy. It was the spring of his richest joys; the rule of his daily deeds. It planted the smile of contentment on his countenance, and tuned his heart to songs of praise and triumph. There was no hollowness in his Christian profession; no outward con-

formity to principles in the truth of which he did not believe. Simplicity and sincerity were marked features in his character. Honesty of purpose was manifest in all his words and ways; duplicity he abhorred. He never studied to be a man of worldly prudence, but lived in happy freedom from secular anxiety, and had unbounded confidence in the care and protection of his heavenly Father.

“On many occasions he evinced a noble spirit of unselfishness. Any attempt to injure the poor and the helpless, was sure to call forth his indignation. Ardent in sympathy with the suffering and oppressed, he was fearless in the denunciation of wrong.

“Though his eccentricities were so prominent as frequently to call forth remark, they were never permitted to extinguish his love to his Saviour. As a minister of the gospel, he laboured, in not a few instances, with great success. He possessed piquancy, pathos, and power, in such a degree as led multitudes to listen to him with eagerness. His sermons abounded with flashes of humour, and touches of tenderness, which drew from his hearers both smiles and tears. Strong men were moved by his words, while children were charmed. For nearly forty years he has been engaged in calling sinners to the cross, and in speaking words of cheer to Christian pilgrims. Probably, some I am addressing are the seals of his ministry, and will be the crown of his rejoicing in the presence of the Lord Jesus at His coming.

“Though he had for a short time been relieved from active ministerial labour, his last Sabbath in the world was spent in his accustomed work of preaching; and on the last evening of his life, he renewed the tickets to one

of the Baillie Street classes. At once, without the intervention of any prolonged period of inactivity or suffering, he has been taken from the Church militant to the Church triumphant.

“We have consigned his mortal remains to the tomb, but he—the man—still lives; lives, as he never lived before. He lives in a fairer clime, and in nobler society than this earth can afford; lives, to gaze on the Saviour’s face, and to hear richer, sweeter notes than ever fell on mortal ears. Blessed is his memory; glorious his reward.”

The address being ended, the Rev. T. B. Saul read the hymn entitled, “A Voice from Heaven.”¹ This hymn Mr. Sellars had sung over the graves of many who had gone before him to glory:—

I shine in the light of God,
His likeness stamps my brow,
Through the shadow of death my feet have trod,
And I reign in glory now.

I have found the joy of heaven;
I am one of the angel band;
And to my head a crown is given,
And a harp is in my hand.

I have learned the song they sing,
Whom Jesus hath set free,
And the glorious halls of heaven now ring,
With my new-born melody.

No breaking heart is here,
No keen and thrilling pain,
No wasted cheek where the frequent tear
Hath roll’d and left its stain.

¹ By the kindness of Mr. Maden, this hymn was printed and circulated among those who stood by the grave.

No sin, no grief, no pain ;
Safe in my happy home ;
My fears all fled, my foes all slain,
My hour of triumph come.

Ye friends of mortal years,
The trusted and the true,
You're walking still through the vale of tears,
But I wait to welcome you.

Do I forget? ah, no !
For memory's golden chain
Still binds my heart to the hearts below,
Till they meet and touch again.

Each link is strong and bright,
And love's electric flame
Flows freely down, like a river of light,
To the world from whence I came.

Do you mourn when another star
Shines out from the glittering sky?
Do you weep and wail when the rage of war
And the storms of conflict die?

Then why do your tears roll down,
And your hearts be sorely riven,
For another gem in the Saviour's crown,
And another soul in heaven?

After the funeral, much sympathy was manifested towards the widow and family. The Castlemere Church, Rochdale, sent a letter of condolence, from which we make the following extract:—"And now that the lips of another of God's devoted servants are closed ; his voice hushed in the stillness of death, and his labours consummated ; it becomes us, who have rejoiced in his labours, and profited by his earnest efforts in the glorious conflict in which he so faithfully engaged, to

bear our humble testimony to his sterling worth as Christian ; to his faithfulness, zeal, and usefulness as minister ; and to his kindliness and sympathy as pastor, friend, and adviser. Truly we may say, God was his guide ; His Word his rule of life ; His work his delight ; and His service his reward. ‘ He walked with God : and he was not ; for God took him.’ ”¹ Such was the testimony of those among whom he had laboured for three years, and in the midst of whom he finished his course. Many other kind things were both written and said, all of which were appreciated and treasured by the family ; to record them here, however, would be to unduly laud in death the memory of one, who in life lived not for human applause, but made it his supreme purpose to obtain the favour of Him whose “Well done is heaven.

¹ Gen. v. 24.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN ANALYSIS.

ONLY a few words more are needed to bring us to "the close of all." Reader! in this book we have attempted to furnish you with the portraiture, not of an angel, but of a man. Had Mr. Sellars been the former, it would have been useless, for all practical purposes, attempting a record of what he was, said, and did; for angels are not placed before men, by their Maker, as models for imitation. He was as truly of the earth earthy as any of us, and yet, through simple faith in Christ, and unquestioning obedience to His will, he was much more angelic than most of us. He had his failings. And when we speak of failings, we do not mean sins, but infirmities which arise from the idiosyncrasies of mind, and give complexion to character. Infirmities are often interpreted as sins. It is a pity they should be. Men set up their own fallible standards,—their own ideals of excellence,—and judge accordingly. Transgression of the law of God is sin; but it is harsh and unjust to brand as sins the infirmities of men, in whom there is no intention to transgress; nor does the Infinite Father do it, "For He knoweth our frame, He remembereth

that we are dust.”¹ Men, for the most part, are regardless of this, consequently, they censure when they ought to pity; take offence when they ought to know offence is not intended; and by so doing betray their own infirmities.

What Mr. Sellars felt, he said. His moments of agony, which were few, were apparent. His joys, too, like springs of water, forced their way to the surface. Unrevealing natures were enigmas to him. Judging others by himself, he concluded that what was felt was a necessity manifested itself. Nor was he more obtuse in understanding reticent persons, than reticent persons were in understanding him. His outspokenness and fidelity were frequently misconstrued. Nevertheless, he discriminated, as few men can do, between conventionality and morality; self-righteousness and religion. With him “external show never passed for sterling worth; white-washed walls were no vouchers for clean shrines. He dared to scrutinise and expose—to raise the gilding, and show base metal under it—to penetrate the sepulchre, and reveal charnel relics.” And because his conduct, in this respect, was unusual, in the eyes of some it was wrong. It would be pretence to affirm that he always did this sort of work in the best way we think he did not; others, perhaps, will say, “We are sure he did not.” But it is well not to pronounce too confidently upon the subject. Some of the work was too delicate for any man to do without hazarding his reputation. And when his doings, in these matters, are viewed in the light, in which actions will ere long be seen by all of us, they may be found to have been

¹ Ps. ciii. 14.

nearer right than our own. As far as he knew his Master's will, he did it: and in saying that, what more requires to be said? All else, in the day of final audit, when compared with that, will be only as the dust of the balance.

We sometimes thought he attached undue importance to visible effects, and not sufficient to the hidden and silent work which no human eye can trace. He seemed to have the idea that all, who laboured in the vineyard of God, could work upon mind in a way similar to that in which the artisan works upon matter. Every cut of the saw, every stroke of the plane, every blow of the hammer does something, and it is seen; and so, according to his idea, should it be with preaching and praying. He talked and toiled, as if ignorant of the fact, that the forces of mind operate silently, and that the most important work is done before conduct declares it.

His regard for spiritual impressions and premonitions was almost fanatical. While some of them, which could not be guesses, proved their genuineness by coming to pass, others as clearly proved that he was no seer. To exclude, as some do, the preternatural from influencing the human mind, is as unphilosophical as it is unscriptural; but to attribute, as others do, every sudden impression, which cannot be traced to the ordinary modes of thought to the supernatural, is as dangerous as it is fallacious. Once admit that God, by His Holy Spirit, makes any impression at all upon the mind of His creatures, or in any way influences it, and the impropriety of limiting Divine operations will appear. So Mr. Sellars thought,

and rightly too. But then, he, like thousands besides himself, in not a few instances, ascribed to the Divine what ought to have been ascribed to the human.

Many infirmities, which will readily occur to those who knew him, might be named ; but, our object in mentioning them at all has been fully answered,—namely, to show that with all his excellences he had defects ; that, however perfect he might be as a Christian, he was imperfect as a man,—yet, his excellences vastly preponderated, and he was unto the Churches, in no ordinary degree, “ *A faithful minister of the New Testament.*”

SAYINGS.

WHILE Mr. Sellars has not left, as has been intimated, elaborately written papers, his sketches and outlines of sermons amount to some hundreds ; not a few of which give evidence of careful preparation. From these, the Sayings are chiefly selected ; and from the same source, many others, of equal value, might be culled.

“ IT does not require many claps of a bell to empty a factory, but the bell requires a deal of pulling to fill one. When I hear the bells ringing for half an hour on a Sunday morning, I think the people are about as fond of church as they are of work.”

“ THE last carriage in the train of Christian graces is ‘ *Charity*,’ which is the luggage-van, and ‘ beareth all things.’ ”¹

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

“How carefully does a cat walk on a wall amid broken glass! It walks circumspectly. And that is the way Christians should walk, amid the sharp-edged snares which beset their path of duty.”

“MEN are said to insure their lives, when they only make sure a certain provision for their families in case they lose their lives. No company on earth can insure a man's life. But through Christ man may insure eternal life. His guarantee is the best, for ‘by Him all things consist.’¹ His terms are so easy that those who have no money may insure. The only premium required is faith in His promises; and the policy can never lapse whilst faith lives. No case is too bad to be accepted. Bonuses are given as often as they are asked for, and at death the policy is promptly paid. All particulars, of capital and conditions, we have in John's Gospel, chapter vi. verse 47. Christ also makes provision for the body, as well as for the soul, of those who insure. Moses took a policy for himself and six hundred thousand, and supplies without fail were sent morning and evening. Nay, for forty days upon the mount, he lived at the table of the Chief Manager, and literally proved that ‘man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.’² Elijah took a policy, and food was sent him direct from the head office. Each of the disciples took a policy, and, though they went forth without either purse or scrip, they had need of nothing.”

¹ Col. i. 17.

² Deut. viii. 3.

"HAVING promised to give my boy a watch, when he reached the age of fourteen years ; never did he see me open the desk in which it was kept, but he asked to see it. And, after examining it, he would say,—‘ Father, this watch is to be mine some day !’ I always said, ‘ Yes, if you are a good boy.’ Nor was it a less pleasure for me to repeat the promise, than it was for the child to hear it repeated. The earnest way in which he inquired about the watch, showed that he had not forgotten my word in which I had caused him to hope. For the same reason, our heavenly Father is pleased when His children seek a renewal of the promises."

"SOME people say they have no talent to pray : it is like a child saying it has no talent to cry. Prayer is not a talent, but an instinct ; it is the expression of the soul's sorrow and need."

"WATER finds the lowest level ; and so, too, does the water of life. It is not to be found on the hill of pride or of self-righteousness. The righteous stoop to drink ; and never do they cry Marah, because of the water's bitterness, or *Ichabod*, because its sweetness has departed."

"IN coming to the throne of grace, the size of our vessel will be the measure of our supply."

“ ‘LEAN hard,’ said one to an infirm man, whom he was helping up a hill ; ‘ I am strong, and will support you.’ ‘ Lean hard,’ says our heavenly Father, to His weak and burdened children ; ‘ for the more you lean on Me, the easier it will be for you.’ ”

“ WHEN the heat of summer goes, the summer passes away. For what can long days do, although they be as the days of a Greenland summer, to ripen crops and fruit without heat. And the soul’s summer is gone, when the warmth of God’s Spirit is taken from it.”

“ PRAYER is the great mother-duty ; all other duties are nourished and sustained by it.”

“ PRAYER is ‘ Heaven’s Telegraph.’ The promises are the handles, worked by the hand of faith ; Christ is the medium of communication, or the wire which reaches from earth to heaven. Any one can work this telegraph who knows how to plead the promises.”

“ As you pass along the streets of towns, you see sign-boards inviting you to call here for this thing, and there for another ; but never have you seen this inscription upon any of these sign-boards : ‘ Call upon Me in

the day of trouble: I will deliver thee.’¹ Possibly such an invitation upon a tradesman’s board would attract more custom than profit. You find it, however, in the Bible—God’s sign-board; and He reckons success, not by the profit He makes, but by the customers He benefits.”

“A MAN was found in the snow, stiff and insensible. By benevolent hands he was placed before a large fire and chafed. It was long before hope was stimulated by signs of returning animation. At length, with involuntary shudderings, the patient faintly said, ‘Colder and colder; colder and colder.’ ‘Ah!’ said the attendants, ‘now there is hope; the blood is circulating, the heat is entering, and he is sensible to cold.’ In the cold and stupor of spiritual sleep, men are unconscious of their condition and peril; but when, by gospel appliances, the Spirit of God awakens them to religious warmth and consciousness, there is a growing sensibility of defilement, guilt, and danger. No cry from the lips of a sinner is so hopeful as ‘Oh! my coldness,—colder and colder; viler and viler.’ Then it is he is really becoming warmer and warmer; then it is the cold is being expelled, and the guilt purged away by the fire and energy of the Holy Spirit.”

“GOD did what Naaman could not; Naaman did what God would not. God provided the little maid, the

¹ Ps. l. 15.

prophet, the river, the efficacy ; but Naaman must journey to the prophet, and obey his instructions. Hence, we learn that God's way of saving is easy to the humble and obedient ; and that such perseverance as will wash seven times is sure to meet with a perfect cure."

"PETER desired three tabernacles, one for Christ, one for Moses, and one for Elias ; but he desired no tabernacle specially for himself. Was it because he wished to dwell somewhere else? Nay, for he felt it good to be there. Very likely Peter intended to lodge with Jesus ; if so, he was wise, for lodging with such a host was far better than having a tabernacle to himself."

"FOR my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.'¹ Man's way in the subscription list is to place the pounds first, the shillings next, and the pence last. God's way is to place according to the ability and willingness of the giver. Hence the widow's mite stands at the top. 'This poor widow hath cast in more than they all.'"²

"THE devil changes the pounds of his customers into shillings, their shillings into pence, their pence into farthings, and their farthings into worse than nothing. God deals with His children in a way the very reverse of that. If anything is given to Him, He always gives

¹ Isa. lv. 8.

² Luke xxi. 3.

something better in return. He changes the pence, of those who trust Him, into shillings, their shillings into pounds, and their pounds into bank-notes. Godliness has the 'promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.'"

"MORAL, as natural likeness, is not the cause, but the fruit of sonship; holiness does not make us God's children, but it proves us to be such."

"IN the early Church, the apostles were not paid according to the talents they possessed, or the services they rendered, 'but distribution was made unto every man according as he had *need!*'"¹

"COVETOUSNESS prevents not only the reception of the highest gifts, but the true enjoyment of the lowest."

"WHEN our desires and possessions are abreast, we are rich. There are two ways by which this condition may be attained. One is, by raising our possessions to the level of our desires; the other, by bringing our desires down to the level of our possessions. The former method is exceedingly difficult, and with many impossible; for, however rapidly they increase their gains, much more rapidly do they increase their wants. So

¹ Acts iv. 35.

that their poverty grows with their wealth. 'Riches consist, not in the extent of our possessions, but in the fewness of our wants.'"

"WHEN Churches court the rich, and despise the poor, they bow to a golden image.

"When ministers of the gospel, in accepting calls to labour in churches or Circuits, pay more regard to stipend than to usefulness,—they also bow to a golden image.

"When congregations attach more importance to chapels than they do to the Churches which worship in them; and are more captivated with the beauty of architecture than with the beauty of holiness, saying, 'Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here,'¹—they likewise bow to a golden image.

"When Churches cling to the State that they may receive endowments,—they, too, bow to a golden image.

"And when large collections, handsome subscriptions, and increase of Church property are more desired and valued than the conversion of sinners,—then, this image is worshipped."

"'THEY that honour me, I will honour.'² This is the text of the Bible and all history. Joseph honoured God, and God gave him the key to heaven's bread-basket, and made him relieving officer to the whole world. Moses honoured God, and his name is honoured to mingle with the songs of the redeemed—

¹ Mark xiii. 1.

² 1 Sam. ii. 30.

‘For they sing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb.’¹ Abraham honoured God, and because there was no honour sufficiently great in this world, heaven was christened afresh,² and he became godfather to all believers—‘The same are the children of Abraham.’”³

“CONTACT with evil does not necessarily lead to the communication of evil. It is as true morally as physically, that when disease is communicated, there must be an affinity of nature. Susceptibility to evil, from worldly associations, depends entirely upon the motive and disposition which leads the individual into those associations.”

“A SPIRITUAL watchman cries in the ears of sinners, ‘Awake, thou that sleepest.’⁴ His duty, in this particular, may not be pleasant, for lovers of sleep do not like to be disturbed. They usually awake in an ill-temper, and pettishly inquire, ‘Why all this noise and commotion?’ And so it is with sleepy sinners. Many hearers like a lullaby, or, as they call it, a comforting ministry,—a ministry so refined and gentle that it will allow the flames to enkindle upon the sleeper rather than disturb him. A ministry of this sort does not alarm the devil; it allows him to keep his goods in peace; therefore, he does not oppose it. But ‘cry aloud, and spare not,’⁵ then the burglar’s goods will be in danger, and he will oppose as a fiend only can oppose, those who imperil his interests.”

¹ Rev. xv. 3

² Luke xvi. 23.

³ Gal. iii. 7.

⁴ Eph. v. 14.

⁵ Isa. lviii. 1.

“BEFORE a settler builds his hut, he first ascertains what the quantity and quality of the water supply will be. And so a child of God, in choosing a residence, should have regard to the house of prayer. Else, like Lot, he may discover, that whilst the country is as the well-watered garden of the Lord, the people are sinners against the Lord exceedingly. In this matter, as in all other, he must ‘seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,’¹ or he will sustain spiritual loss.”

“HAVING drawn living water from the well of salvation for ourselves, let us, like Rebekah, who drew for Abraham’s servant and his camels, draw for others,—our children, our servants, our neighbours, the Church of Christ, and the world ; that all may take of the water of life freely.”

“IF, by infirmity or any justifiable cause, we are prevented attending a place of worship, then we may hope that He ‘who knoweth our frame’ will visit us in our home as He did the daughter of Jairus ; but, if we voluntarily absent ourselves, we have no reason to suppose He will come to us.”

“SOCIAL and political reforms may skim over certain sores in the community, but they do not go to the root of moral disease ; and what fails to reach the root, cannot effect a cure. The gospel remedy is the only one that cures, and all besides is quackery.”

¹ Matt. vi. 33.

“‘AND be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess.’¹ Many stop here, and thank God that they are not as other men—that they are much better than the poor drunkard, for they are teetotalers and Good Templars. Well, I am thankful they are so far out of the city of Destruction. But they will do well to ‘remember Lot’s wife,’² who halted before she reached the city of safety. The doom of halters is not less terrible than the doom of those who never commence the flight. Moreover, it is possible in running from one evil to run into another. There is such a thing as changing one’s vices, and I have known many abstainers from alcoholic liquors become worldly-minded and covetous. The sin of covetousness is as hard, if not harder, to cure than the sin of drunkenness, and it will as certainly exclude from heaven. I am an abstainer myself, and for that reason I rejoice ; and, as a Christian, I will rejoice the more in the advancement of teetotalism, which I believe to be the pioneer of the gospel—‘the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord ;’³ but John is not Christ, and teetotalism is not *the gospel*. To remove hindrances to being saved is one thing, but being saved is another. Let teetotalers remember this, and never rest in anything less than a complete deliverance from all sin.”

“IN agony man is no atheist : the mind that knows not where else to fly, flies to God. An infidel, whilst working in a mine, under the inspiration of sensations caused by a large lump of coal falling on his back, cried aloud,

¹ Eph. v. 18.

² Luke xvii. 32.

³ Luke iii. 4.

‘Oh, my God!’ ‘What!’ said a fellow-workman, ‘I thought you did not believe in a God?’ ‘I did not,’ replied the infidel, ‘but that fall of coal has converted me.’ Yes, and like sensations, caused by a fall of coal or the fall of anything else, would wring from most infidels a confession which, in health and ease, they have not the honesty to make.”

“WHEN windows are not clean, they obstruct the vision. The soul sees through the medium of the thoughts, and when they are impure the glass is dirty, and the soul’s vision is obscured. On earth, as in heaven, only the pure in heart see God.”

“‘AND cutting himself with stones.’¹ The sinner is his own tormentor. Sin blunts the very instinct of self-preservation, All sin is suicidal: it cuts character; it cuts health; it cuts the soul away from that which would bind it to peace, hope, happiness, and eternal life; and thus cutting the mooring chains it leaves the soul adrift.”

“THE sanctified need no purgatory, and the unsanctified will find none.”

“HOW often do storms of wind tear trees up by the roots; but never do they tear up those which strike

¹ Mark v. 5.

their roots deep into the earth. As with trees, so with Christians. 'Be rooted and grounded in love.'"¹

"INVENTORS of evil stories do not often circulate them to any great extent themselves ; they send out hand-bills in the form of busy-bodies and tattlers. And as Sampson tied firebrands to the tails of foxes to burn the standing corn of the Philistines, so these scandal-mongers set society on a blaze."

"THE voice of Sinai is as necessary to convince of sin as the voice of mercy is to free from it."

"MAN'S will is a successful opponent of the Saviour. Were it not so, it would be impossible for man to get to hell."

"MEMORY proves that mind is distinct from matter. The body is constantly changing ; physiologists say the change is total every seven years. More than fifty years ago I remember putting the question to my father,— 'Why do people go to church?' I still retain the answer. If, then, I possess not one particle of matter which composed my body seven years ago, my mind must be distinct from my body, since no impression can survive that which retains it."

¹ Eph. iii. 17.

“THERE are few places in which singing is not suitable. Moses sang in the wilderness, David in the tabernacle, Solomon in the temple, Jesus in the upper-room, and Paul and Silas in the prison. It is suitable under most conditions,—in times of gladness it is the expression of our joy, and in sorrow it is our solace.”

“‘THY Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee.’¹ The best thing, in the best place, for the best purpose.”

“‘RESIST the devil, and he will flee from you :’²—The Christian’s enemy, the Christian’s duty, and the Christian’s conquest.”

“To feel an idle thought as actual wickedness, and to mourn for the minutest fault, is exquisite sensitiveness.”

“IF I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?”³ On the margin of Mr. Sellars’ pocket Bible, opposite this passage, we find the following words, expressive of his full consecration to God, with which we close,—

I, NO MORE !

¹ Ps. cxix. 11.

² Jas. iv. 7.

³ John xxi. 22.

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